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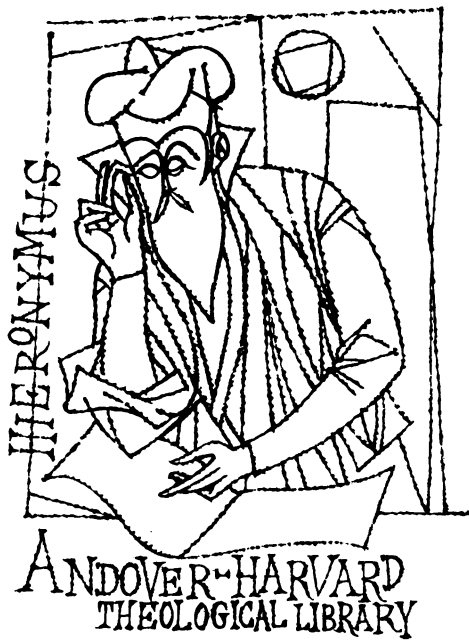
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ENDEAVOURS

AFTER THE

CHRISTIAN LIFE:

DISCOURSES,

BY

JAMES MARTINEAU.

"Je sais que Dieu a voulu que les vérités divines entrent du cœur dans l'esprit, et non pas de l'esprit dans le cœur. Et de là vient qu'au lieu qu'en parlant des choses humaines, on dit qu'il faut les connaître avant que de les aimer; les Saintes, au contraire, disent, en parlant des choses divines, qu'il faut les aimer pour les connaître, et qu'on n'entre dans la vérité que par la charité."—PASCAL: *Pensées*.

FIRST SERIES.

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PREFACE

TO THE FIRST SERIES

IN a little work* published seven years ago, the Author of the following Discourses intimated a desire to work out for himself and present to his readers, a distinct answer to the question, 'What is Christianity?' and the work then put forth was designed as a mere preliminary to another, in which this great inquiry should be prosecuted. The purpose then announced still remains, and the materials for its execution are for the most part prepared. The present volume, however, is not offered as any part of its fulfilment; but rather in temporary apology for its non-fulfilment.

Of his reasons for withholding for a time that promised volume, this is not the proper place to speak at any length. A change in some of his views, and the consciousness of immaturity in others, have certainly had a share of influence in producing the postponement. But it has been occasioned chiefly by his desire to lay aside for a while the polemical character, which necessity, not choice, has impressed upon his former writings; and which, until relieved by some task of higher spirit, misrepresents the order of his convictions,—engaging him

* The Rationale of Religious Enquiry; or the Question stated of Reason, the Bible, and the Church.

upon the outward form of Christian belief, while silent of the inner heart of human life and faith.

Of his reasons for presenting this unpromised volume, the Author has but few words to say. As its contents were written, so are they now published, because he takes them to be true, and good to be recognized as true by the consciousness of all men; and not having been produced as taskwork, but out of an earnest heart, they may possibly find a reader here and there, to whom they speak a fitting and faithful word. Should the book avail for this, it will sufficiently justify its appearance: should it not, it will speedily disappear, and at least no harm be done.

No formal connexion will be found among the several Discourses in this volume. Prepared at different times, and in different moods of meditation, they are related to each other only by their common direction towards the great ends of responsible existence. The title, indeed, expresses the spirit, more than the matter of the book;—which ‘endeavours’ to produce, rather than describe, the essential temper of ‘the Christian life.’

The Author would have introduced a larger number of Discourses having direct reference, in word as well as in spirit, to the Divine Ministry of Christ, did he not hope to follow up the present volume by another devoted especially to this subject, and a third on the Christianity of Paul. In the meanwhile, he trusts that those who, in devout reading of books and men, look for that rather which *is* Christian, than which *talks of* Christianity, will find in this little volume no faint impression of the religion by which he, no less than they, desires to live and die.

Liverpool, June 20, 1843.



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DISCOURSES.

I.

THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST.

ROMANS VIII. 2.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE IN JESUS CHRIST.

‘A MAN,’ says the Apostle Paul, ‘is the image and glory of God.’ And truly, it is from our own human nature, from its deep experiences and earnest affections, that we form our conceptions of Deity, and become qualified to interpret the solemn intimations which creation and scripture afford to us respecting him. Without the stirring of divine qualities within us, without some consciousness of that which we ascribe to the All-perfect, the names and descriptions by which he is made known to us would be empty words, as idly sent to us as treatises of sound to the deaf, or some ‘high discourse of reason’ to the fool. All that we believe without us, we first feel within us; and it is the one sufficient proof of the grandeur and awfulness of our nature, that we have faith in God; for no merely finite being can possibly believe the infinite. The universe of which each man conceives, exists primarily in his own mind; *there* dwell the

Angel he enthrones in the height, and the Demon he covers with the deep; and vainly would *he* talk of shunning hell, who never felt its fires in his bosom; or *he* converse of heaven, whose soul was never pure and green as Paradise.

In virtue of this resemblance between the human and the divine mind, Christ is the representative and revealer of both. God, by the very immensity of his nature, is a stationary being,—perfect, and therefore unchangeable: and so far as Jesus Christ was ‘the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;’ so far as one uniform mind and power possessed him, as one sacred purpose was impressed upon his life; so far is he the emblem of Deity; affording us, in speech, in feeling, in will, in act, an idea of God, which nothing borrowed from the material creation or mortal life can at all approach. His unity of soul, the unalterable spirit pervading all his altering moods of thought,—in short, his identity with himself, is altogether divine. In so far, on the other hand, as he underwent vicissitudes of emotion; in so far as he spake, thought, acted differently in different periods of his career, and a changed hue of soul came over him, and threw across the world before him a brighter or a sadder shade; so far is he the ideal and picture of the mind of Man. His self-variations are altogether human.

The casual vicissitudes of feeling in Christ, his alternations of anxiety and hope, of rejoicing and of tears, have often been appealed to, as traces of his having had a like nature with our own. The appeal is just; and shows us that he was impressed, as we are, by those outward incidents which may make the morning happy and the evening sad. But besides these accidental agitations, which follow the complexion of our external



lot, there is a far more important set of changes, which the affections and character undergo from internal causes ; which occur in regular succession, marking and characterizing the different periods of mental, if not of physical life ; and constitute the stages of moral development through which the noblest minds visibly pass to their perfection. The incidental fluctuations of emotion raised by the good or evil tidings of the hour, are but as the separate waves which the passing wind may soothe to a ripple or press into a storm : but the seasonal changes of character, of which I now speak, are rather the great tidal movements of the deep within us, depending on less capricious forces than the transient gale, and bearing on their surface the mere film of tempest or of calm. The succession is distinctly traceable in the mind of Christ, making his life a model of moral progression the most impressive and sublime. He thus becomes in a new sense the representative of our duty, our visible and outward conscience : revealing to us not only the end to which we must attain, but the successive steps by which our nature reaches it ; the process as well as the result ; the natural history of the affections which belong to the true perfection of the will. He is the type of the pure religious life ; all its developments being crowded, by the rapid ripening of his soul, into his brief experience : and we read in the gospel a divine allegory of humanity, symbolical of those profound and silent changes, of passion and speculation, of faith and love, through which a holy mind rises to its most godlike power.

I propose to follow Jesus through the several periods, so far as they appear, of his outward and inward history ; and to show the correspondence between their

order and the successive stages of growth in a religious and holy soul.

The only incident recorded of the childhood of Jesus strikingly commences the analogy between his nature and ours, and happily introduces him to us as the representative of the great ideas of duty and God within the soul. The annual pilgrimage from his village to the holy city, which had hitherto been the child's holiday, full only of the wonder and delight of travel, seized hold, on one occasion, of deeper feelings, which absorbed him with their new intensity. The visit which had become conventional with others, appeared at once with its full meaning to him : and with the surprise of a fresh reverence he turned from the gay streets, and the sunny excursion, and the social entertainment, to the quiet courts of the temple, where the ancient story of miracle was told, and the mystery of prophecy explained. Eager to prolong this new and solemn interest, he missed, you will remember, the opportunity of travelling back with the caravan of Nazareth : and when told by his parents, on their return in quest of him, ' Thy father and mother have sought thee sorrowing,' he replied, with a tone not altogether filial, ' Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business ?

The answer is wonderfully expressive of the spirit of young piety, taking its first dignity as an independent principle of action in the mind. The lessons of devotion are, for a long time, adopted passively, with listening faith ; the great ideas dwindling, as they fall from the teacher's lips, to the dimensions of the infant mind receiving them. When the mother calls her children to her knees to speak to them of God, she is *herself* the greatest object in their affections. It is



by her power over them that God becomes Venerable ; by the purity of her eye that he becomes Holy ; by the silence of the hour that he becomes Awful ; by the tenderness of her tones that he becomes Dear. That the parents bend, with lowly look and serene result, before some invisible Presence, is the first and sufficient hint to the heart's latent faith ; which therefore blends awhile with the domestic sympathies, simply mingling with them an element of mystery, and imparting to them a deeper and less earthy colouring. But the thoughts which constitute religion are too vast and solemn to remain subordinate. They are germs of a growth, which, with true nurture, must burst into independent life, and overshadow the whole soul. When the mind, beginning to be busy for itself, ponders the ideas of the infinite and eternal, it detects, as if by sudden inspiration, the immensity of the relations which it sustains to God and immortality : the old formulas of religious instruction break their husk, and give forth the seeds of wonder and of love ; everything that before seemed great and worthy is dwarfed ; and human affinities and duties sink into nothingness compared with the heavenly world which has been discovered. There is a period when earnest spirits become thus possessed ; disposed to contrast the grandeur of their new ideal with the littleness of all that is actual ; and to look with a sublimated feeling, which in harsher natures passes into contempt, on pursuits and relations once sufficient for the heart's reverence. At such a crisis it was that Jesus gave the answer to his parents ; when his piety first broke into original and self-luminous power, and not only took the centre of his system, but threatened to put out those minor and dependent lights which, when their place is truly understood, appear no

less heavenly. He spake in the entranced and exclusive spirit of young devotion. Well then may we bear with the rebukes which this earnest temper is sometimes impelled to administer : for, by a mental necessity, all strong feeling must be exclusive, till wisdom and experience have trained it ; till the worth of many things has been ascertained ; till God is seen, not sitting aloof from his creation to show how contemptible it is, but pervading it to give it sanctity ; till it is found how much that is human is also divine. None learned this so soon or so profoundly as Jesus. And even now, the very sight of home restored his household sympathies again : for when he went to Nazareth with his parents, ' he was obedient unto them ; and increased in favour ' with ' man,' as well as ' God.'

Nearly twenty years elapsed. Boyhood passed without events. The slight flush of the youthful soul had fled. Vainly did Mary notice how a light, as from within, came upon his features, as he bent over his daily toil, or forced him to pause, as if in some secret and ineffable colloquy. Though the life of God within him was strong enough to win the world, and give direction to its reverence for ever, he was a villager still, serving the same necessities, and pacing the same track of custom as others. It was inevitable that the spiritual force within him should make insurrection against the narrow and cramping conditions by which it was confined ; that it should strive to burst its fetters, and find or create a career worthy of itself : in short, that we should find Jesus no longer at Nazareth, but in the wilderness ; led thither, in spite of himself, of interest and comfort, of habit and home, by the beckoning of the divine image in his heart. That solitude he was impelled to seek, that he might grapple face to face

with the evil and earthly spirits that beset our path, disengage himself from the encumbrances of usage and of doubt, and struggle into a life befitting one who stands in immensity and dwells with God. To the eye of the outward observer he may appear altogether quiet, sitting on the bleak rock in the collapse of feebleness and rest. Nevertheless, in that still form is the most terrible of conflicts; an exchange of awful defiance between Heaven and Hell; a heaving and wrestling of immortal powers, doing battle for the mind of Jesus, and suspending on that moment the souls of millions and the destinies of the world. His holy spirit won the victory; the angels of peace and power led him forth; and the transition was made from the obscurity of ordinary toil to the glory of his everlasting ministry.

Now in the development of all earnest and noble minds there is a passage corresponding with this scene. There is a time when their image of duty grows too large for the accidental lot in which it is encased, and seeks to burst it; when human life changes its aspect before the eye; and custom can no longer show it to us as a flat dull field, where we may plough, and build, and find shelter and sleep; but it swells into verdant slopes around the base of everlasting hills, whose summit no man can discern, passing away as a dim shape into the blue infinite above the lingering clouds. There is a crisis when every faithful son of God is agitated by a fierce controversy between the earthly and the divine elements of his nature. Self and the flesh seductively whisper, 'Thou hast a life of many necessities; earn thy bread and eat it; and pay thyself for all thy trouble with a warm hearth and a soft bed.' The voice of God thunders in reply, 'Thy life is short, thy work is great, thy God is near, thy heaven is far;

do I not send thee forth, armed with thought and speech, and a strong right hand, to contend with the evil and avenge the good? Indulge no more, or I shall leave thee: do thy best, and faint not: take up thy free-will, and come with me.' By some such conflict does every great mind quit its ease to serve its responsibilities; part, if need be, with the sympathy of friends and the security of neighbourhood, in fidelity to duty; and suffer wasting and loneliness, as in the bleakest desert, till temptation be vanquished, and hesitancy flung aside.

The course of Jesus was now taken. The peasant had assumed the prophet's mantle and Messiah's power. How calm and free his mind had thus become, how unembarrassed it dwelt in the pure atmosphere of its own convictions, is evident from this, that to his own village he went and announced the change. In the very synagogue where parents and neighbours worshipped, and aged knees to which he had clung in infant sport were bent in prayer; where his ear had first heard the music, and his soul felt the sublimity of ancient prophecy, *there* 'He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind; to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."' No wonder that as he spake in comment worthy of such a text, his hearers 'were astonished at the gracious words that proceeded from his lips.' The moment introduced, and fitly represents, the first era of his ministry; during the whole of which a *joyous* inspiration was on him. No sad forebodings visited him: no doubts restrained

his freedom : no tears gushed forth to check his voice of mercy and delay his word of power. It was a hopeful and vigorous career ; crowded with blessed deeds, and flushed with countless benedictions that only kindled him to an alacrity more godlike. Nay, it seemed impossible for him to bear his own messages of love fast enough : and first the Twelve, and then the Seventy, were sent successively forth on a systematic mission, to multiply his power, and make ready the paths of peace. The report of the Seventy, on their return, declares the triumph of his name and spirit, not only in the conquest of disease, but in the attachment of the poor and the oppressed : and with the glow of glad devotion that marks this period Jesus exclaimed, ' I beheld Satan, as lightning, fall from heaven.' The Twelve brought far different tidings, which changed again the colours of his life.

Who does not discern, in the history of every faithful mind, a period like this ?—a period immediately following the solemn league and covenant which we make with Duty. Through sore and dark temptations the Christian first emerges into the free-will, by which he stands up and lives in the likeness of God : and then, in the joy of his freedom and sincerity, he springs, with self-precipitation, into the mission heaven assigns. That which he speaks—is it not true ? that which he feels, is holy ; that which he desires, is great and good. He loves the souls he would convert, and knows them of the same family with his own. He has conquered in himself the weakness and the ills with which he wars in others ; and shall he not have faith ? God is vaster than the most gigantic wrongs ; and *his* righteousness, which is as the great mountains, will speedily suppress them in the abyss. In the power of this

glorious faith, the true servant and prophet of the Lord goes forth ; makes a generous and confident rush upon evil ; and—since it is the Immortal against the Perishable—he trusts to sweep it off and triumph in its flight. But, alas ! the time is short, the conflict long ; and, faint and bleeding, he discovers that he must fall, before the cry of victory. And yet was that faith of his most true. Its computation of forces was most unerring,—for always shall evil be overcome by good ;—with mistake, you will say, in its dates ;—but that is only the prophet's mistake, that sees the future as the present, and considers the certainties of God superior to time. This right-souled man has uplifted his arm, and done a faithful work : and the efforts of the wise and holy are not mere momentary strokes dissipated and lost ; but an everlasting pressure upon ill, with tension increasing without end, till it drives the monstrous mass across the brink of annihilation.

Sad however is the hour when generous hope receives its first check ; and with mournful attention Jesus hears, on the return of the Twelve, tidings of hostility and danger, forcing on him the conviction that he must die ; tidings especially of the vigilance of Herod, recent murderer of John the Baptist. The shock was somewhat sudden. He retreated into solitude among the hills, that he might feel awhile without obstruction the refuge of his disciples' friendship and his Father's power. And soon in the Transfiguration, where his mind conversed with prophets of an elder age, the impression of his decease as the penalty of his faithfulness, becomes finally fixed. Thenceforth, as it seems to me, not only did his views and expectations undergo a great change and receive a large accession of truth, but the spirit and moral tone of his ministry was dif-

ferent. Steadfast as before, even to 'set his face to go to Jerusalem,' he is less joyous and more serene; more earnest and lofty, as if his great aims had become sublimer for the distance to which they had receded, and dearer for the price at which they must be gained; more prone to tears, when asked for by the griefs of others, more driven to prayer in wrestling with his own. If his deeds of power,—which by their nature must be self-repetitions,—are less frequent, he gives himself more to speech, varying ever those words of eternal life from which all ages learn divinest wisdom. And so he passes on to his crucifixion: numbering the days only by the duties that remain; devoting himself to the crowds of Jerusalem by day, and to the family of Bethany at even; in the morning teaching in the temple, and predicting its fall at night; blessing the widow's charity, laying bare the priest's hypocrisy; found by his conspirators at midnight prayer; in the trial, concerned for Peter; in the hall, convulsing the conscience of Pilate; on the fatal road, turning with pity to the daughters of Jerusalem; and not exclaiming, 'It is finished,' till from the cross he looked on a mother for whom he found a home, and a disciple whom he made blessed by his trust.

And even this last change in Christ appears to be not a mere external modification, but an internal ripening of his perfect character, the last unfolding of its progressive beauty: to which also there is a corresponding stage, wherever the true religious life fulfils its course. When the first sanguine enterprises of conscience seem to fail (though fail they cannot, except to live as fast as our impatient fancies); when a cloud, like that which fell upon Christ's future, descends upon the prospects of the good; when the evils against which

he has taken up his vow, withstand the siege of his enthusiasm, and years ebb away, and strength departs, with no visible impression made; and friends become treacherous, and foes alert, and God's good Providence seems tedious and cruel,—then weak spirits may succumb, able to keep faith alive no more; and even the man mighty of heart may find the controversy great, whether to go on and bear up against such sorrow of the soul. But if he be wise, he clings more firmly to his fidelity, and thinks more truly of his mission, wherein he is appointed not to do much, but to do well. He too takes counsel of the prophets of old,—the sainted spirits of the good, who rebuke his impatience, and tell him that *they* followed each other at intervals of centuries, and, as they found, so after true service still left, the mighty work of good undone; that the fruits of heaven will not ripen in some sunny hour; but every noble mind must lend its transitory ray; and then, when the full year of Providence has gone its round, perchance the collective sunshine of humanity may have matured the produce of the tree of life. Such communion does indeed speak to him of his 'decease which he must accomplish;' asks him to join the glorious *succession* of the good; sends him with transfigured spirit back into the field of duty; gives him a sadder but more enduring wisdom; by which, with or without hope, in or out of peril, he lives and labours on; renouncing power and success, yet winning their divinest forms; and through self-crucifixion gifted with immortality.

II.

THE BESETTING GOD.

PSALM CXXXIX. 5.

THOU HAST BESET ME BEHIND AND BEFORE, AND LAID THINE HAND
UPON ME.

PERHAPS it is impossible for us to represent God to our minds under any greater *physical* image than that of his diffused presence through every region of space. Certainly, to feel that He lives, as the percipient and determining agent throughout the universe, conscious of all things actual or possible from the vivid centre to the desert margin of its sphere, excluded from neither air, nor earth, nor sea, nor souls, but clad with them as a vestment, and gathering up their laws within his being, is a sublimer, and therefore a truer mode of thought, than the conception of a remote and retired mechanician, inspecting from without the engine of creation to see how it performs. Indeed, this mechanical metaphor, so skilfully elaborated by Paley, appears to be, of all representations of the divine nature, the least religious; its very clearness proclaiming its insufficiency for those affections which seek, not the finite, but the infinite; its coldness repelling all emotions, and reducing them to physiological admiration; and its scientific procedure presenting the

Creator to us in a relation quite too mean, as one of the causes in creation, to whom a chapter might be devoted in any treatise on dynamics; and on evidence quite below the real, as a highly probable God. The true natural language of devotion speaks out rather in the poetry of the Psalmist and the prayers of Christ; declares the living contact of the Divine Spirit with the human, the mystic implication of his nature with ours, and ours with his; his serenity amid our griefs, his sanctity amid our guilt, his wakefulness in our sleep, his life through our death, his silence amid our stormy force; and refers to him as the Absolute basis of all relative existence; all else being in comparison but phantasm and shadow, and He alone the real and Essential Life.

Were we to insist on philosophical correctness of speech in matters transcending all our modes of definition, we should reject, as irrational and in truth unmeaning, the question respecting any Spiritual being, '*where is he?*' Local position, physical presence, is a relation of material things, and cannot be affirmed of Mind, without confounding it with body. Thought, will, love, which have no size and take up no space, can be in no spot, and move to none; and to the souls of which these are attributes we can ascribe neither habitation nor locomotion. It is only the bodily effects and outward manifestations of mental force,—the gestures of the visible frame and the actions of the solid limbs,—to which place can be assigned: and when we say, that we are *here* and not *there*, it is to this organic system connected with our spiritual nature, and to this alone, that we refer. Were we to press the notion further, and endeavour to settle the question, where our minds are, the intrinsic impropriety of the question



would leave us altogether at a loss. There would be no more reason to attribute to the soul a residence within the body, than in the remotest station of the universe; for God could as well establish a constant relation between the mind and the organism on which it was to act, at a distance thus vast, as in the nearest proximity: and there would be no more wonder in the movement of my arm on earth complying with my will at the confines of the solar system, than in the constant rush of our world on its career, in obedience to a sun separated by distance so immense. It may be, after all, but figuratively that we speak of any *migration* of the soul in death. When the body appropriated to it as its instrument and expression falls, we cannot say that the mind is here; we dream of what we know not, if we fancy it to require removal in order to present itself manifestly in a higher region. One order of physical relations being dropped here, another may on the instant be assumed elsewhere, revealing the spirit to a new society, and giving it the apparition of fresh worlds.

If we are unable to speak, otherwise than in figures, of the place of our own minds, it is not surprising that God's presence is quite ineffable, and that we bow with reverent assent to the poet's admission, 'such knowledge is too wonderful for me.' But the confession of our ignorance once made, we may proceed to use such poor thought and language as we find least unsuitable to so high a matter; for it is the essence and beginning of religion to feel, that all our belief and speech respecting God is untrue, yet infinitely truer than any non-belief and silence. In whatever sense then, and on whatever grounds, we affirm the tenancy of our own frame by the soul that governs it, must we fill the

universe with the everlasting Spirit of whose thought it is the development. His agency is all-comprehending; and declares itself alike before us, from whichever side of the world's orbit, from whichever phase of life we survey the spectacle of the heavens, or the phenomena of human history; nor can we help regarding the physical laws of creation (the same in all worlds) as his personal habits; the moral order of Providence as the unfolding of his character; the forms and flush of the universal beauty as the effusion of his art; the griefs and joys, the temptations, lapses and triumphs, and all the glorious strife of responsible natures, as the energy of his moral sentiments, and his profuse donation of a divine free-will. It is true we do not everywhere alike discern him; but this is our blindness, and not his darkness. In the narrow ways of common life, amid the din of labour and traffic, he seems to pass away; though it were well that his sanctity should be nigh, to cool the heats, and guard the purity, of our toiling and tempted hours. But we acknowledge space and silence to be his Attributes; and when the evening dew has laid the noon-day dust of care, and the vision strained by microscopic anxieties takes the wide sweep of meditation, and earth sleeps as a desert beneath the starry Infinite, the unspeakable Presence wraps us close again, and startles us in the wild night-wind, and gazes straight into our eyes from those ancient lights of heaven.

And to the same Omnipresence which the individual thinker thus consciously realizes, the collective race of men is perpetually bearing an unconscious testimony. As if in acknowledgment of the mystery of God, as if with an instinctive feeling that his being is the *meeting-place* of light and shade, and that in approaching

him we must stand on the confines between the seen and the unseen ; all nations and all faiths of cultivated men have chosen the *twilight* hour, morning and evening, for their devotion ; and so it has happened that, all round the earth, on the bordering circle between the darkness and the day, a zone of worshippers has been ever spread, looking forth for the Almighty tenant of space, one half towards the East, brilliant with the dawn, the other into the hemisphere of night, descending on the West. The veil of shadow, as it shifts, has glanced upon adoring souls, and by its touch cast down a fresh multitude to kneel ; and as they have gazed into opposite regions for their God, they have virtually owned his presence 'besetting them behind and before.' Our planet thus instinct with devout life, girded with intent and perceptive souls, covered over, as with a divine retina, by the purer conscience of humanity, is like a living eye, watching on every side the immensity of Deity in which it floats, and grateful for the rays that relieve its native gloom. We sometimes complain of the conditions of our being, as unfavourable to the discernment and the love of God ; we speak of him as veiled from us by our senses, and of the world as the outer region of exile from which he is peculiarly hid. In imagining what is holy and divine we take flight to other worlds, and conceive that there the film must fall away, and all adorable realities burst upon the sight. Alas ! what reason have we to think any other station in the universe more sanctifying than our own ? There is none, so far as we can tell, under the more immediate touch of God ; none whence sublimer deeps are open to adoration ; none murmuring with the whisper of more thrilling affections, or ennobled as the theatre of more glorious duties. The dimness we

deplore, no travelling would cure; the most perfect of observatories will not serve the blind; we carry our darkness with us; and instead of wandering to fresh scenes, and blaming our planetary atmosphere, and flying over creation for a purer air, it behoves us, in simple faith, to sit by our own wayside and cry, 'Lord, that we may receive our sight.' The Psalmist found no fault with this world as setting God beyond his reach; but having the full eye of his affections opened in perpetual vigil, he rather was haunted by the Omniscient more awfully than he could well bear, and would fain have found some shade, though it were in darkness or the grave, from a presence so piercing and a light so clear. Those to whom the earth is not consecrated, will find their heaven profane.

God 'besets us behind and before' in another sense. He pervades the successions of time as well as the fields of space, and occupies eternity no less than immensity. The imagination faints beneath the weight of ages which crowd upon it in the simplest meditation on his being, and in the utterance of the most familiar of our prayers. We call him the '*God of our fathers*;' and we feel that there is some stability at centre, while we can tell our cares to One listening at our right hand, by whom theirs are remembered and were removed; who yesterday took pity on their quaint perplexities, and smiles to-day on ours, not wiser yet, but just as bitter and as real; and who accepts their strains of happy and emancipated love, while putting into our hearts the song of exile and the plaint of aspiration. We invoke him as the '*God of Jesus*;' and so doing, we have contact with a Mind yet conscious of every scene in the tragedy of Palestine, wherein the shadows of the Lake-storm are uneffaced, and the cry of the Crucifixion is



ringing still. We speak to him as the '*Ancient of days*;' and so converse with One who feels not the gradations of intensity that make difference to us between the present and past,—with a consciousness that has no perspective; and we rest on the surface of an unfathomable nature, comprising without confusion the undulation of all events, be it the tidal sweep of centuries, or the surges of a nation's rage, or the small and vivid ripples of private grief. Nay, we pray to him as having abode '*in heaven*;' and we cannot lift our eye to that pure vault without thinking how old are those stars amid which our imagination enspheres him; how they watched over patriarchs in the plain of Mamre, and paced the night in the same order and with like speed as yesterday; how they were ready there to meet the first human sight that was turned aloft to gaze; and witnessed those primeval revolutions that, having prepared the earth for man, left their grotesque and gigantic vestiges as hieroglyphic hints to carry him back into the waste places of eternity, and measure for him God's most recent step out of the Everlasting. How do the most vehement forms of history, the tempestuous minds that from any other point of view would terrify us by their might,—the savage hordes that have swept as a whirlwind over the patient structure of civilization,—how do they all, in this contemplation, dwindle into momentary shapes, angel or demon spectres, vividly visible and suddenly submerged! By the granite pillars of God's eternity, deep-rooted in the abyss, we all in turn climb to the surface for a moment, to slip again into the night. But during the moment we are there, if we use that moment well, we all see the same presence; turning this way and that, we perceive only that he 'besets us

behind and before.' The Psalmist came up at a very different point of eternity from ourselves ; and as he looked fore and aft, he could see only God. We, who are presented at a station where the Hebrew poet himself is quite invisible, discern on every side the same immensity which he adored. Well may we fall down and worship with every creature, 'Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty! who art, and wast, and art to come.'

There is yet another sense in which we must confess that God 'besets us behind and before.' His physical agency in all places is a great and solemn certainty ; his ceaseless energy through all time presents us with sublimer thoughts ; but there is a *moral* presence of his Spirit to our minds which places us in relations to him more intimate and sacred. Surely there occur to every uncorrupted heart some stirrings of a diviner life ; some consciousness, obscure and transient it may be, but deep and authoritative, of a nobler calling than we have yet obeyed ; a rooted dissatisfaction with self, a suspicion of some poison in the will, a helpless veneration for somewhat that is gazed at with a sigh as out of reach. It is the touch of God upon us ; his heavy hand laid upon our conscience, and felt by all who are not numb with the paralytic twist of sin. Even the languid mind of self-indulgence, drowsy with too much sense, complacent with too much self, scarcely escapes the sacred warning. For though it is quite possible that such a one may have no compunctions in the retrospect which he takes from the observatory not of conscience but of comfort, though he may even have lapsed from all knowledge of remorse, so that God has ceased to 'beset him *from behind* ;' yet the future is not securely shut against contingencies ; and a moment

of alarm, a shock of death, a night of misery, may burst the guilty slumber, and wake the poor mortal, as on a morning breaking in tempest, with the flash of conviction, Behold! 'tis God! To most, I believe, there comes at least the casual misgiving that there is a destiny in reserve for them to which no justice of the heart has yet been done; and to each, there is the anticipated crumbling away of all his solid ground in death; which even to the sternest unbelief is a lapsing into the dark grasp of an annihilating God. So that the Almighty Spirit besets even these most lonely of his children '*from before.*' And as for minds that are awake and at all in quest of him, he haunts them every way. O that we could but know how false it is that 'the good man is satisfied from himself'! When was there ever one of us who did not feel his recollections full of shame and grief, and find in the past the cup that overflowed with tears? When, one that did not look into the future with resolves made timid and anxious by the failures of experience, and distrust that breaks the high young courage of the heart, and prayers that in utterance half expect refusal? Which of us can stand this day at the solemn meeting-point of past and future, without abasement for the one, and trembling for the other?—without being beset by the divine Spirit in penitent regrets from behind, and in passionate aspirations from before? And herein we should discover only this; that he has laid his hand upon us,—has resolved to claim us to the uttermost, and will haunt us with his rebukes, though they wither us with sorrow, till we surrender without terms.

It is not apparently the design of heaven that we should be permitted to seek rest and to desire ease in this aspiring life; and it is the vain attempt to make

compromise between duty and indulgence, that creates the corrosions of conscience, and the perpetual inquietudes of spirit, and disappoints our own ideal from day to day and from year to year. There is no way to the peace of God but by absolute self-abandonment to his will that whispers within us, without reservation of happiness or self. Then, the relinquishment once made,—our whole nature given up to any high faith within the heart,—the sorrows of mortality, its reproaches, its fears, will soon vanish, and even death be robbed of its terrors ; for, to quote the noble words of Lord Bacon, ‘ He that dies in an earnest pursuit is like one that is wounded in hot blood, who for the time scarce feels the hurt ; and therefore a mind fixed and bent upon somewhat that is good, doth best avert the dolours of death.’

III.

GREAT PRINCIPLES AND SMALL DUTIES.

JOHN XIII. 14.

IF I THEN, YOUR LORD AND MASTER, HAVE WASHED YOUR FEET, YE OUGHT
ALSO TO WASH ONE ANOTHER'S FEET.

EVERY fiction that has ever laid strong hold on human belief is the mistaken image of some great truth ; to which reason will direct its search, while half-reason is content with laughing at the superstition, and unreason with believing it. Thus, the doctrine of the Incarnation faithfully represents the impression produced by the ministry and character of Christ. It is the dark shadow thrown across the ages of Christendom by his mortal life, as it inevitably sinks into the distance. It is but the too literal description of the real elements of his history ; a mistake of the morally, for the physically divine ; a reference to celestial descent of that majesty of soul which, even in the eclipse of grief, seemed too great for any meaner origin. Indeed, how better could we speak of the life of Jesus than in the language of this doctrine ; as the submission of a most heavenly spirit to the severest burden of the flesh,—the voluntary immersion within the shades of deep suffering of a godlike mind, visibly radiant with light unknown to others, and betraying its relation to eternity, while

making the weary pilgrimage of time? It was the peculiarity of his greatness that it—stooped, I will not say, but—penetrated without stooping, to the humblest wants; not simply stepped casually aside to look at the most ignominious sorrows, but went directly to them, and lived wholly in them; scattered glorious miracles and sacred truths along the hidden bye-paths and in the mean recesses of existence; serving the mendicant and the widow, blessing the child, healing the leprosy of body and of soul, and kneeling to wash even the traitor's feet. In *himself* was the serene and unapproachable dignity of a higher nature, a mind at one with the universe and its Author; in his *acts*, a frugal respect for the most neglected elements of human life, declaring that he came not to be ministered unto but to minister. What wonder that, when he had been ensphered in the immortal world, he appeared to the affectionate memories of men as a divine being who had disrobed himself of rightful glory to take pity on their sorrows, and had put on for the gladness of praise the garment of heaviness? The conception is at least in close kindred with a noble truth;—*that a soul occupied with great ideas best performs small duties*; that the divinest views of life penetrate most clearly into the meanest emergencies; that so far from petty principles being best proportioned to petty trials, a heavenly spirit taking up its abode with us can alone sustain well the daily toils, and tranquilly pass the humiliations, of our condition; and that, to keep the house of the soul in order due and pure, a god must come down and dwell within, as servant of all its work.

Even in intellectual culture this principle receives illustration; and it will be found that the ripest knowledge is best qualified to instruct the most complete

ignorance. It is a common mistake to suppose, that those who know little suffice to inform those who know less: that the master who is but a stage before the pupil can, as well as another, show him the way; nay, that there may even be an advantage in this near approach between the minds of teacher and of taught; since the recollection of recent difficulties, and the vividness of fresh acquisition, give to the one a more living interest in the progress of the other. Of all educational errors, this is one of the gravest. The approximation required between the mind of teacher and of taught is not that of a common ignorance, but of mutual sympathy; not a partnership in narrowness of understanding, but that thorough insight of the one into the other, that orderly analysis of the tangled skein of thought, that patient and masterly skill in developing conception after conception, with a constant view to a remote result, which can only belong to comprehensive knowledge and prompt affections. With whatever accuracy the recently initiated may give out his new stores, he will rigidly follow the precise method by which he made them his own; and will want that variety and fertility of resource, that command of the several paths of access to a truth, which are given by a thorough survey of the whole field on which he stands. The instructor needs to have a full perception, not merely of the internal contents, but also of the external relations, of that which he unfolds; as the astronomer knows but little if, ignorant of the place and laws of moon and sun, he has examined only their mountains and their spots. The sense of proportion between the different parts and stages of a subject, the appreciation of every step at its true value, the foresight of the section that remains in its real magnitude

and direction, are qualities so essential to the teacher, that without them all instruction is but an insult to the learner's understanding. And in virtue of these it is, that the most cultivated minds are usually the most patient, most clear, most rationally progressive; most studious of accuracy in details, because not impatiently shut up within them as absolutely limiting the view, but quietly contemplating them from without in their relation to the whole. Neglect and depreciation of intellectual minutiae are characteristics of the ill-informed: and where the granular parts of study are thrown away or loosely held, there will be found no compact mass of knowledge solid and clear as crystal, but a sandy accumulation, bound together by no cohesion and transmitting no light. And above and beyond all the advantages which a higher culture gives in the mere system of communicating knowledge, must be placed that indefinable and mysterious power which a superior mind always puts forth upon an inferior;—that living and life-giving action, by which the mental forces are strengthened and developed, and a spirit of intelligence is produced, far transcending in excellence the acquisition of any special ideas. In the task of instruction, so lightly assumed, so unworthily esteemed, no amount of wisdom would be superfluous and lost; and even the child's elementary teaching would be best conducted, were it possible, by Omniscience itself. The more comprehensive the range of intellectual view, and the more minute the perception of its parts, the greater will be the simplicity of conception, the aptitude for exposition, and the directness of access to the open and expectant mind. This adaptation to the humblest wants is the peculiar triumph of the highest spirit of knowledge.

In the same way it is observable, that the trivial services of social life are best performed, and the lesser particles of domestic happiness are most skilfully organized, by the deepest and the fairest heart. It is an error to suppose that homely minds are the best administrators of small duties. Who does not know how wretched a contradiction such a rule receives in the moral economy of many a home?—how often the daily troubles, the swarm of blessed cares, the innumerable minutiae of arrangement in a family, prove quite too much for the generalship of feeble minds, and even the clever selfishness of strong ones; how a petty and scrupulous anxiety, in defending with infinite perseverance some small and almost invisible point of frugality and comfort, surrenders the greater unobserved, and while saving money ruins minds; how, on the other hand, a rough and unmellowed sagacity *rules* indeed and without defeat, but, while maintaining in action the mechanism of government, creates a constant and intolerable friction, a grating together of reluctant wills, a groaning under the consciousness of force, that make the movements of life fret and chafe incessantly? But where, in the presiding genius of a home, taste and sympathy unite (and in their genuine forms they cannot be separated)—the intelligent feeling for moral beauty and the deep heart of domestic love,—with what ease, what mastery, what graceful disposition, do the seeming trivialities of existence fall into order, and drop a blessing as they take their place! how do the hours steal away, unnoticed but by the precious fruits they leave! and by the self-renunciations of affection, there comes a spontaneous adjustment of various wills; and not an innocent pleasure is lost, nor a pure taste offended, nor a peculiar temper

unconsidered; and every day has its silent achievements of wisdom, and every night its retrospect of piety and love; and the tranquil thoughts that, in the evening meditation, come down with the starlight, seem like the serenade of angels, bringing in melody the peace of God! Wherever this picture is realized, it is not by microscopic solicitude of spirit, but by comprehension of mind, and enlargement of heart; by that breadth and nicety of moral view which discerns everything in due proportion, and in avoiding an intense elaboration of trifles, has energy to spare for what is great; in short, by a perception akin to that of God, whose providing frugality is on an infinite scale, vigilant alike in heaven and on earth; whose art colours a universe with beauty, and touches with its pencil the petals of a flower. A soul thus pure and large disowns the paltry rules of dignity, the silly notions of great and mean, by which fashion distorts God's real proportions; is utterly delivered from the spirit of contempt; and in consulting for the benign administration of life, will learn many a task, and discharge many an office, from which lesser beings, esteeming themselves greater, would shrink as ignoble. But, in truth, nothing is degrading which a high and graceful purpose ennobles; and offices the most menial cease to be menial, the moment they are wrought in love. What thousand services are rendered, aye and by delicate hands, around the bed of sickness, which, else considered mean, become at once holy and quite inalienable rights! To smooth the pillow, to proffer the draught, to soothe or to obey the fancies of the delirious will, to sit for hours as a mere sentinel of the feverish sleep;—these things are suddenly erected, by their relation to hope and life, into sacred privileges.

And experience is perpetually bringing occasions, similar in kind though of less persuasive poignancy, when a true eye and a lovely heart will quickly see the relations of things thrown into a new position, and calling for a sacrifice of conventional order to the higher laws of the affections; and alike without condescension and without ostentation, will noiselessly take the post of gentle service and do the kindly deed. Thus is it that the lesser graces display themselves most richly, like the leaves and flowers of life, where there is the deepest and the widest root of love; not like the staring and artificial blossoms of dry custom that, winter or summer, cannot change; but living petals woven in Nature's workshop and folded by her tender skill, opening and shutting morning and night, glancing and trembling in the sunshine and the breeze. This easy capacity of great affections for small duties is the peculiar triumph of the highest spirit of love.

The same application of the loftiest principles to the most minute details is still more perceptible when we rise a step higher, and from the operations of knowledge and of love, turn to notice the agency of high religious faith. In the management and conquest of the daily disappointments and small vexations which befall every life,—the life of the idle and luxurious no less than of the busy and struggling,—only a devout mind attains to any real success, and evinces a triumphant power. Who has not observed how wonderfully the mere insect cares, that are ever on the wing in the noon-day heat of life, have power to sting and to annoy even the giant minds around which they sport, and to provoke them into the most unseemly war? The finest sense, the profoundest knowledge, the most unquestionable taste, often prove an unequal match for insignifi-

cant irritations ; and a man whose philosophy subdues nature, and whose force of thought and purpose gives him ascendancy over men, may keep, in his own temper, an unvanquished enemy at home. Nor is this found only in cases of great self-ignorance, or impaired vigour in the moral sense. Even where the evil is self-confessed and felt as a perpetual shame, where the conscience sets up against it an honest and firm resistance, it is quite possible that very little progress may be made, and very little quietness attained. This is one of the many forms of Duty in which mere moral conviction, however clear and strong, will continually fail. You may be persuaded that it is wrong to be provoked ; you may repeat to yourself that it is useless ; you may command your lips to silence, and breathe no angry word : and yet withal the perturbation is not gone, but only dumb ; the conquest is not made, but the defeat concealed. There is nothing in the efforts of volition that has power to change the point of mental view ; these self-strivings do not lift you out of the level of your trial ; you remain imprisoned in the midst of it, wrestle with its miseries as you may ; wanting the uplifting faith, by which you escape from it, and look down upon it. It may be very absurd, nay very immoral, to be teased by trifles ; but alas ! while you remain in the dust, reason as you may, it *will* annoy you ; and there is no help for it, but to retire into a higher and grassier region, where the sultry road is visible from afar. We must go in contemplation *out of life*, ere we can see how its troubles subside and are lost, like evanescent waves, in the deeps of eternity and the immensity of God. A mind that can make this migration from the scene by which it is surrounded, is removed from all vain strife of will, and gains its

tranquillity without an effort ; feels no difficulty in being gentle and serene, but rather wonders that it could ever be tempted from its pure repose. How welcome would it often be to many a child of anxiety and toil, to be suddenly transferred from the heat and din of the city, the restlessness and worry of the mart, to the midnight garden or the mountain top ! And like refreshment does a high faith, with its infinite prospects ever open to the heart, afford to the worn and weary : no laborious travels are needed for the devout mind ; for it carries within it Alpine heights and starlit skies, which it may reach with a moment's thought, and feel at once the loneliness of nature, and the magnificence of God.

Nor is it only in the government of ourselves that high faith is found the most efficient aid for the less dignified duties. In the services which benevolence must render to others, the same truth is exemplified ; and the humblest and homeliest form of benevolence, attention to the grievances and sufferings of the body, receives its most powerful motive from the sublimest of all truths, the doctrine of human immortality. A different result might perhaps have been anticipated. It might have been thought that for the truest sympathy with the pains of disease and the privations of infirmity we must look to the disciples of materialism and annihilation ; that they who take the body to be our all, would most vehemently deplore its fragility, and most affectionately tend its decline ; that no love would be so faithful as that which believed, at the death-bed of a friend, that the real last look, the absolute farewell, was drawing nigh. On the theory of extinction, O with what close embrace would it seem natural to cling to each sinking life,—like kindred in shipwreck that cannot part ! The vivid expectation of futurity, which has so

often led the believer to ascetic contempt for his own physical wants, would appear only consistent, if it passed by in equal scorn the bodily miseries of others. But it has not been so. In this, as in all the other instances, it appears that the sublimest instruments of the mind are the best fitted to the most homely offices of duty; and that truths the most divine are the gentlest servitors of wants the most humiliating. In the eye of one who looks on his fellow-man as a compound being, the immortal element imparts, not meanness, but a species of sanctity, to the mortal; just as the worshipper feels that of the temple whose space has been set apart for God, the very stones are sacred, and the pavement claims a venerated tread. It is this constant penetration to the mind within, this recognition of something that is not seen, that overcomes the physical repulsiveness of corporeal want and pain, and gives a tranquil patience to the Christian who watches the ravages of disease and the approach of death. Nay, when he sees the soul which is the heir of heaven prostrated and tortured by a wretched frame, he thinks it almost an indignity that so kingly a habitant should pine in so poor a cell, and a native of the light itself cry thus aloud in dark captivity; and with touched and generous heart he flies to the sufferer, with such help and succour as he may.

Let us, then, cherish and revere the great sentiments which we assemble here to pour forth in worship, not as the occasional solace, or the weekly dignities of our existence; but as truths that naturally penetrate to the very heart of life's activity, and best administer even the small frugalities of conscience. Nothing less than the majesty of God and the powers of the world to come, can maintain the peace and sanctity of our

homes, the order and serenity of our minds, the spirit of patience and tender mercy in our hearts. Then only shall we wisely economize moments when we anticipate for ourselves an eternity, and lose no grain of wisdom, when we discern the glorious and immortal structure which its successive accumulations shall raise. Then will even the merest drudgery of duty cease to humble us, when we transfigure it by the glory of our own spirit. Seek ye then the things that are above, where your life is hid with Christ in God.

IV.

EDEN AND GETHSEMANE.

1 COR. XV. 46.

AND SO IT IS WRITTEN, THE FIRST MAN ADAM WAS MADE A LIVING SOUL, THE
LAST ADAM WAS MADE A QUICKENING SPIRIT. NOWHEIT THAT WAS NOT
FIRST WHICH IS SPIRITUAL, BUT THAT WHICH IS NATURAL; AND
AFTERWARD THAT WHICH IS SPIRITUAL.

GREAT and sacred was the day of Adam's birth; if for no other reason, yet for this,—that he was the first man, and had a living soul. The impressions received by the original human being, dropped silently at dawn from infinite night upon this green earth, can never have been repeated. With maturity of powers, yet without a memory or a hope: with full-eyed perception, yet without interpreting experience: with all things new, yet without surprise, since also there was nothing old; he was thrown upon those primitive instincts by which God teaches the untaught: left to wander over his abode, and note the ever-living attitudes of nature: and from her bewildering mixture of the original with the repeated, from rest and weariness, from the confusion of waking and of dreams (both real alike to him), from the glow of noon and the fall of darkness and the night, from the summer shower and the winter snow, to disentangle some order at length, and recognise the elementary laws of the spot wherein he dwelt.

Fast as five senses and a receiving mind would permit, did he find *where* he was, and *when* he came, and by *what sort of scene* he was environed; how the fair show of creation came round, each part in its own section of space and time, persuading him to notice and obey. And when he is thus the pupil of the external world, he is in training to become its Lord,—by the discipline of submission learning the faculty of rule. Beneath the steady eye of human observation, nature becomes fascinated, and consents to be the menial and the drudge of man, doing the bidding of his wants and will, and apprenticing her illimitable power to his prescribing skill. And so was it given to the father of our race, for himself and for his children, to subdue the earth,—to put forth the invisible force of his mind in conquest of its palpable energies,—to give the savage elements their first lesson as the domestic slaves of human life, and make some rude advance towards that docility with which now they till and spin, and weave and carry burdens, with the fleetness of the winds and the precision of the hours. To a living and understanding soul, what *was* the unexhausted world, but in itself a Paradise? And was there aught else for its earliest inhabitant, but to discover what fruits he might open his bosom to receive from the universe around? Worthily does the Bible open with the story of Eden, the fresh dawn, the untrodden garden of our life. Truly too, whatever geologists may find and say, is that day identified with the general act of creation; for in no intelligible human sense was there any universe, till there was a soul filled with the idea thereof. The system of things of which Moses proposed to himself to write the origin, was not a Saurian or a Mammoth's world, not such a creation as was pictured in the per-

ceptions of huge reptiles and extinct fishes ; but such a universe as the spirit of a man discerns within and so spreads without him ; and of this it is certain, that the instant of *his* birth was the date of *its* creation. For had he been different, it would not have been the same ; had he been opposite, it would have been reversed ; and had he not been at all, it would not have appeared. Whatever is solemn in the apparition of the fair and infinite universe, belongs to the day of Adam's birth.

Greater, however, and more sacred, was the day of Christ's birth ; of that ' second man,' as Paul says with glorious meaning, of that ' last Adam,' who was ' a quickening spirit,' and the first parent of a new race of souls. He, too, was placed by the hand of God upon a fresh world, and commissioned to explore its silent and trackless ways,—to watch and rest in its darkness, and use and bless its light,—to learn by instincts divine and true, of its blossoms and its fruits, its fountains and its floods. But it was the world within, the untrodden forests of the soul where the consciousness of God hides itself in such dim light, and whispers with such mystic sound, as befit a region so boundless and primeval,—it was this, on which Jesus dwelt as the first inspired interpreter. To him it was given, not to cast his eye around human life and observe by what scene it was *encompassed* ; but to retire *into* it, and reveal what it *contained* ; not to disclose how man is materially placed, but *what he spiritually is* ; to comprehend and direct, not his natural advantages of skill and physical power, but his grief, his hope, his strife, his love, his sin, his worship. He was to find, not what comfort man may open his bosom to receive, but what blessing he may open his heart to give ; nay, what transforming

light may go forth from the conscience and the faith within, to make the common earth divine, and exhibit around it the mountain heights of God's protection : to show us the Father, not as the great mechanic of the universe, whose arrangements we obey that we may use them ; but as the Holy Spirit that moves us with the sigh of infinite desires, and the prayer of ever conscious guilt, and the meek hope—that stays by us so long as we are absolutely true—of help and pity from the Holiest. And if the affections are as the coloured window,—near and small and of the earth—or far and vast and of the sky, through which we receive the images of all things, and find them change with the glass of our perceptions, how justly does the Apostle Paul deem the work of Christ ' a new creation ' ! If he that makes an eye, calls up the mighty phantasm of the heavens and the earth ; he that forms a soul within us, remodels our universe and reveals our God. Eden then is less sacred than the streets of Bethlehem and the fields of Nazareth ; though, as befits the cradle of the natural man who needs such things, its atmosphere might be purer, and its slopes more verdant. Indeed in all their adjuncts do we see the character of the two events, and how ' afterwards ' alone came ' that which was spiritual.' When the first man heard the voice and step of the Most High, it was outwardly among the trees,—as was natural to one born of the mere physical and constructing energy of God, without a mother and without a home : when Jesus discerned the divine accents, the whispers of the Father were *within* him, the solemn articulation of the spirit infinitely affectionate and wise ; —a distinction altogether suitable to one born of that mother who hid many things in her heart,—granted to us by that gentlest form of the Divine love, whence

alone great and noble natures are ever nurtured. When Adam entered life, the *earth* was glad and jubilant ; when Christ was born, the joy was testified by Angels, and the anthem sounded from the *sky*. The 'first man' subdued the physical world ; the 'last man' won the immortal heaven.

Fellow-men and fellow-Christians, there is an Adam and a Christ within us all ;—a natural and a spiritual man, whereof the father of our race and the author of our faith are the respective emblems, both in the order of their succession and the nature of their mission. We are endowed with powers of sense, of understanding, of action, by which we communicate with the scene of our present existence, and win triumphs over external and finite nature ; by which we appropriate and multiply the fruits of Providence permitted to our happiness. And we are conscious, however faintly, of aspirations and affections, of a faith and wonder, of a hope and sadness, which bear us beyond the margin of the earthly and finite, and afford some glimpse of the infinitude in which we live. By the one we go forth and discover our knowledge ; by the other return within and learn our ignorance : by the one we conquer nature, by the other we serve God : by the one we shut ourselves up in life, by the other we look with full gaze through death : by the one we acquire happiness, and sagacity, and skill ; by the other wisdom, and sanctity, and truth : by the one we look on our position and all that surrounds it with the eye of economy ; by the other with the eye of love. Our first and superficial aim is to be, like Adam, *lord below* : our last to be, like Christ, *associate above*. In short, the individual mind is conducted through a history like the sacred record of the general race, and, if it be just to its capacities,

passes through a period of new creation ; and every noble life, like the Bible (which is ' the book of life '), begins with Paradise, and ends with Heaven.

Ere Jesus became the Christ, he was led into the desert to be tempted. And before the Messiah within us—the messenger-spirit of God in the soul—can make his inspiration felt, and render his voice articulate and clear, we too must have been called to severe and lonely struggles with the power of sin. On no lighter terms can the natural man pass into the spiritual, and Deity shape forth a dwelling within the deeps of our humanity. In childhood, we live in God's creation, as in the un-anxious shelter of some Eden ; the innocent in a garden of fruits, where the tillage demands no toil, and, with smallest restraint, we have little else but to gather and enjoy : and the utmost duty is to abstain, rather than to do ; to keep the lips from forbidden fruits, not to spend the labour and sorrow of the brow or of the soul, in order to raise and multiply the bread of nature or of life. And many, alas ! there are, who make their life this sort of holiday thing unto the end, and retain its childishness, only, from the nature of the case, losing all its innocence :—strolling through it as a mere fruit-gathering place, a garden of indulgence, a Paradise sacred no more because empty now of God, and unvisited by the murmurs of his voice. There comes a time to us all, when the sense of responsibility starts up and rebukes our anxiety for ease ; tells us that we are living, fast and once for all, a life that enlarges to the scale of eternity, and is embosomed every where in God ; bids us spring from our collapse of selfishness and sleep, take up the full dimensions of our strength, and go forth to do much, if it be possible, and at least to do worthily and well. And full often is the conflict terrible between

the indolence of custom, the passiveness of self-will, and this inspiring impulse of the divine deliverer within us. Many a secret passage of our existence does it make bleak as the wilderness, and lonely as the Dead-Sea shore ; in many an hour of meditation, seemingly the stillest, does it inwardly tear us, as in the mid-strife of heaven and hell, and leave us wasted as with fasting nigh to death : but O ! if we are only true to the Spirit that declares ‘ we shall not live by bread alone ; ’ if we quietly descend from the pinnacle of our pride (though sin may pretend to make it sacred and call it a turret of the temple) ; if we keep close to the meek appointed ways of Him whom our presumption must not try : if we bend no knee to the majesty of splendid wrong, but, in single allegiance to the Holiest, drive away the most glorious spirit of guilt that honours our strength with his assault :—do we not find at length that angels come and minister unto us ; that the waste appears to vanish suddenly away, and the desert to blossom as the rose ; that we are restored as to a garden, not of the earth, but of the Lord, filled with the whispers of divinest peace ? And so our energy is born from the moments of weakness and of fear ; and were there no hell to tempt us, there were no heaven to bless. From the crisis of trembling and of doubt, we issue forth to take up our mission gladly, with the unspeakable shelter of God without us, and the hidden life of his love within us.

Again : he who gave us the Gospel was ‘ the Man of Sorrows ; ’ and the glad tidings of great joy were pronounced by a voice mellowed by many a sadness. And not otherwise is it with the messenger-spirit of our private hearts ; which does not become the Christ, the consecrated revealer of what is holy, unless it be much

acquainted with grief. Heaven and God are best discerned through tears; scarcely perhaps discerned at all without them. I do not mean that a man must be outwardly afflicted, and lose his comforts or his friends, before he can become devout. Many a Christian maintains the truest heart of piety without such dispensations; and more, alas! remain as hard and cold as ever in spite of them. That there is felt to be a general tendency, however, in the blow of calamity and the sense of loss, to awaken the latent thought of God and persuade us to seek his refuge, the current language of devotion in every age, the constant association of prayer with the hour of bereavement and the scenes of death, suffice to show. Yet is this effect of external distress only a particular instance of a general truth, viz., that religion springs up in the mind, *whenever any of the infinite affections and desires press severely against the finite conditions of our existence.* In ill-disciplined and contracted souls, this sorrowful condition is never fulfilled, except when some much-loved blessing is forcibly snatched away, and their human attachment (which is infinite) is surprised (though knowing it well before) at the violence of death, knocks with vain cries at the cruel barriers of our humanity, and is answered by the voice of mystery from beyond. But such was not the sorrow with which Christ was stricken; nor is such the only sorrow with which good and faithful minds are affected. There are many immeasurable affections of our nature, besides that which makes our kindred dear:—the yearning for truth, the delight in beauty, the veneration for excellence, the high ambition of conscience ever pressing forward yet unable to attain, —these also live within us, and strive unceasingly in noble hearts; and there is an inner and viewless sorrow, a spontaneous weeping of these infinite desires,

whence the highest order of faith and devotion will be found to spring; so much so, that no one can even think of Christ, visibly social and cheerful as he was, without the belief of a secret sadness, that might be overheard in his solitary prayers. Those who make the end of existence to consist of happiness may try to conceal so perplexing a fact, and may draw pictures of the exceeding pleasantness of religion: but human nature, trained in the school of Christianity, throws away as false the delineation of piety in the disguise of Hebe, and declares that there is something higher far than happiness; that thought, which is ever full of care and trouble, is better far; that all true and disinterested affection, which often is called to mourn, is better still; that the devoted allegiance of conscience to duty and to God,—which ever has in it more of penitence than of joy,—is noblest of all. If happiness means the satisfaction of desire (and I can conceive no other definition), then there is necessarily something greater, viz., religion, which implies constant yearning and aspiration, and therefore non-satisfaction of desire. In truth, that which is deemed the *happiest* period of life must pass away, before we can sink into the deep secrets of faith and hope. The primitive gladness of childhood is that of a bounded and limited existence, which earnestly wishes for nothing that exceeds the dimensions of possibility;—of a human Paradise, about whose enclosure-line no inquiry is made: and through sorrow and the sense of sin we must issue from those peaceful gates, and make pilgrimage amid the thistle and the thorn instead of the blossom and the rose, and lie panting on the dust, instead of sleeping on the green sward, of life, before we learn through mortal weakness our immortal strength, and feel in the exile of the *earth* the shelter of the skies. Then, however, the

spirit of Christ, the man of sorrows, gives us a re-birth of joy through tears. Before, we were simply unheeding of death ; then, we enter into the consciousness of immortality. Before, our will was restrained by a law which we could not keep ; then, it is emancipated by a fresh love that more than keeps it ; whose free inclination goes before all precept and authoritative faith ; and hopeth all things, believeth all things, endureth all things ; nay, even can *do* all things, through the Christ that strengtheneth it.

Children then of nature, we are also sons of God ; born of the genial earth, we are to climb the glorious heaven ; and to the human lot that makes us of one blood with Adam, is added the divine liberty of being of one spirit with Christ. That liberty we cannot decline, for we are conscious of it now ; and if we look not on it as on the face of an angel, it will haunt us with its gaze like the eye of a fiend. The severe prerogatives of an existence half-divine are ours. To wear away life in unproductive harmlessness is innocent no more : with the glory we take the cross ; and instead of slumbering at noon in Eden, must keep the midnight watch within Gethsemane. We, too, like our great leader, must be made perfect through suffering ; but the struggle by night will bring the calmness of the morning ; the hour of exceeding sorrow will prepare the day of godlike strength ; the prayer for deliverance calls down the power of endurance. And while to the reluctant their cross is too heavy to be borne, it grows light to the heart of willing trust. The faithful heirs of ' the man of sorrows,' transcending the trials they cannot decline, may quit the world with the cry, ' It is finished,' and pass through the silence of death to the peace of God.

V.

SORROW NO SIN.

LUKE XXIII. 28.

BUT JESUS, TURNING UNTO THEM, SAID, DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM, WEEP
NOT FOR ME, BUT WEEP FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR YOUR CHILDREN.

CHRIST then could invite to tears;—to tears over departing excellence;—to tears which men idly call selfish,—tears ‘for themselves and for their children.’ He whose mission it was to teach the Paternity of Providence, and the serenity of the immortal hope,—he who himself lived in the divinest peace which they can give, thought it no treason to these truths to weep. To the eye of the Man of Sorrows, sorrow was no sin: nor did he, who was emphatically the Son of God, see, in even the passionate utterance of grief, any of that spirit of filial distrust towards God and reluctant acceptance of his will, which have often been charged on it by the hard and cold temper of his followers. Religious professors have put their own congenial interpretation on the morality of Christ; and being themselves—but too frequently—unfeeling and unsocial mystics, they have multiplied the penances of natural emotion, and sublimed from the gospel its pure humanities. If we accept their representations, our religion

aims to cancel our natural affections, and substitute others at variance with them ; the impulses of gladness and grief are alike to be condemned, as a rebel love of perishable things ; the most agitating passages of our being, which convulse us to the centre, are to be met with a rigid and tearless piety ; the future, though invisible and intangible, though approachable only by kindled imagination, is to be acknowledged as the only region of the fair and good, and to supersede all other claims upon our desire and regard. The present, though the intensest point of existence, is to be comparatively unfelt ; and the past, whereof the retrospect is sweet and solemn to the travelled pilgrim,—the history of childhood and its unforgotten friendships, of youth and its unchecked aspirations, of maturity with its worn yet deeper love, its more crushing yet worthier anxieties, its purer but more melancholy wisdom,—all this, because it is human and not divine, of earth and not of heaven, is to be refused the tribute of a sigh. For my own part, regarding our human nature as the image of its divine parent, and in nothing more truly that image than in the impulses of its disinterested love, I bend in reverence before the emotions of every melted heart ; believing this present life to be the worthy childhood of futurity, conceiving its interests, its happiness to be substantially the same, but framed upon a smaller scale and clouded with a deeper shade, I see in its history nothing trivial, in its events nothing contemptible, in its vicissitudes nothing unworthy of a wise man's profoundest thought. And taking the Gospel to afford a promise not of the extinction of human nature in heaven, but of its perpetuity,—an assurance not that we shall be converted into chill and pious phantoms, but simply elevated into immortal

men,—I would gather from that hope a deeper veneration for all the pure tastes and natural feelings of a good mind: I would maintain the sanctity of human joy and human grief: I would protest against all stern censure on the outbreaks of true sorrow; and would plead that to mourn,—aye, and with broken spirit,—the departure of virtue and of love, is—not a resistance to a Father's will, not an oblivion of his Providence, not the expression of an ignoble selfishness, not a mistrust of a restoring heaven; but only a fitting homage to God's most benignant gifts, the grateful glance of a loving eye on blessings, than which nothing more holy, more peaceful, more exalting, is conferred by a guardian benevolence on man.

Those who blame as unchristian the deep grief which bereavement awakens, must extend their disapprobation much farther, and censure all strong human attachments. Sorrow is not an independent state of mind, standing unconnected with all others. It could not be cancelled singly, leaving all other qualities of our nature in their integrity. It is the effect, and under the present conditions of our being the inevitable effect, of strong affections. Nay, it is not so much their result, as a certain attitude of those affections themselves. It not simply *flows from* the love of excellence, of wisdom, of sympathy, but it *is* that very love, when conscious that excellence, that wisdom, that sympathy, have departed. The more intense the delight in their presence, the more poignant must be the impression of their absence: and you cannot destroy the anguish, unless you forbid the joy. Grief is only the *memory* of widowed affection: and nothing but a draft of utter oblivion could lap it in insensibility. When the ties of strong and refined attachment have long bound us to a home;

when the sympathies of those who share with us that home have become as the needful light to our daily toil, and the guardian spirits of our nightly rest ; when years have passed on, and brought us many a sickness banished by their fidelity, many a danger averted by their counsels, many an anxiety rendered tolerable by their participation ; when often they too have gazed on us from the bed of pain, and threatened to depart, but we have been permitted to rescue them from the grave, and therein have doubled all our tenderness ; when from this close inspection of pure hearts, we have learned to think nobly of human nature, and hopefully of the Providence of God ; when their voices, common enough to other ears, but fraught to us with unnumbered memories of life, have become the natural music of the earth ;—can this melody be silent, can these virtues depart, can these remembrances be deprived of their living centre, without leaving us trembling and desolate ? Can all these fibres of our life be thus wrenched, and not bleed at every pore ? And to forget,—it cannot be. We daily pass through places which are the shrine of a thousand recollections : we are startled by tones which pour on us a flood of conviction : we open a book, and there is the very name : we write a date, and it is an anniversary. These associations with the past, I do not say *excite* sorrow, but to an affectionate mind *are* sorrow. The morality then which rebukes sorrow, rebukes love. It is useless expatiating on the evils which strong grief inflicts on ourselves and others : you are bound to show that the affections of which it is an inseparable form contain no counteracting good ; that it is more blessed, more holy, to freeze up the springs of emotion, than to suffer them perennially to fertilize our nature, though they some-

times deluge it ; that it is better to keep loose from all that is human, and love nothing that we may lose. You cannot sever them : grief and love must stay or go together. And who can doubt that *that* is the truest duty to God which permits to us the most disinterested heart for each other ; *that* the purest devotion which sanctifies and not chills our affections ; *that* the most genuine trust, which dares to cultivate to the utmost sympathies wounded here and serenely blest only hereafter ; *that* the most filial hope, which, regarding the brotherhood of man as an inference from the paternity of God, looks to heaven as to another home ?

There are doubtless cases not infrequent, in which the mind is unduly overpowered by affliction ; in which the tranquillity of the reason is wholly overset, and the energy of the will utterly prostrated. Here, beyond controversy, is a state of mind morally wrong : for God never absolves us from our duties, however he may sadden them. But to rebuke the feelings of grief in such a case is to cast the censure in the wrong place : it is not that the sorrow is excessive, but that other emotions are defective in their strength. Nor is the distinction merely verbal and trivial. For, the natural effect of such misplaced blame surely is, that the sufferer will endeavour simply to abate the intensity of his sorrow, to extrude from his mind the emotions which are charged with guilty excess : his aim will be purely negative, *not* to think so fixedly, *not* to feel so profoundly, respecting the bereavement which has fallen upon his life. And this aim is directed to an end both undesirable and impracticable. It is undesirable ; for to touch the working of the affections with partial torpor, to benumb the tenderness without adding to the energy of the mind, to deaden the susceptibility of

memory without quickening the vividness of hope, would surely be no improvement to the character; it would be a mere deduction from the amount of mind: and sorrow is at least better than dulness of soul. It is moreover impracticable; for our nature affords us no means of exerting a negative and destructive action upon our own characters. One class of feelings can be extinguished only by the creation of another; one sentiment banished only by inviting the antagonism of another; one interest supplanted only by the stronger occupancy of another. So long as this is unperceived, the over-grieving heart will seek in vain to discipline itself. Thinking of its sorrow as too much, instead of its sense of duty as too little, it fails to meet pointedly its own remedy. The will feebly casts about its efforts in the dark regions of the mind; wastes its vigour in trying to forget: sometimes fancies forgetfulness; then pretends it; assumes a hollow tranquillity, and affects to itself and others an interest in topics and in duties which are not truly loved, for they have never been truly and distinctly sought. From all such aimless directions of the will there arises a far greater evil than simple failure: an unconscious insincerity grows up, a hazy perception of our real mental condition, a confusion of actual and fictitious feelings, of emotions which we merely imagine with those which we truly experience, than which few states of character can be more perilous to moral power and progress. The wise interpreter of his own nature will let his mourning affections alone. To interfere with them would be wrestling with his own strength. But he will draw forth, into prominent light, sentiments now sleeping idly in the shaded recesses of his mind. He will summon up the sense of responsibility, to rouse him

with the spectacle of his relations to God his father, and his brother, man ; to recount to him the deeds of duty and the toils of thought, which are yet to be achieved ere life is done ; to show him the circle of high faculties, which the Creator has given him to enoble and refine and keep ready for a world where thought and virtue are immortalized. He will call forth his affections for the living who surround him, and whom yet it is his happiness to love, and his obligation to bless. And these sympathies will be fruitful in work for his hands, and interests refreshing to his heart. To preserve in his home the graceful order of pure and peaceful affections ; to omit in the world no delicate attention of friendship ; to forget not the claims of poverty and ignorance and sin to the compassion of all who would be faithful to their kind ;— here are invitations enough to the aspirings of benevolence, to bid the drooping soul look up. And the sufferer will evoke the spirit of Christian trust and hope. For, as the memory of bereaved affection is grief, so is its hope the restorer of peace : from the past is forced on us the sense of loss ; from the future rises the expectation of recovery : in traversing the past, our thoughts glide along a procession of dear events arrested by a tomb ; in conceiving of the future, they behold the same events opening into renewed being, and spreading themselves in all blessed varieties along the vistas of interminable life : the sadnesses of each successive point of remembrance are reversed, its losses regathered ; its tears, as it were, unwept before the smile of God ; its plaints unsung amid the harmonies of heaven ; its sins untwined by the wounding yet healing hand of an angel penitence. Invoke the spirit of this trust ; and though sorrow



may not dry its tears, it rises to a dignity above despair.

It is not unusual to speak of sorrow for the dead as expressing a distrust of the Providence of God, and a doubt of an eternal hereafter. In this however there is but little truth. True it is, wherever the reason actually disbelieves the great facts of a Divine government and human immortality, bereavement must indeed fall upon the heart with terrific weight. It is then a blow of tyrannic fate, a visible stroke of annihilation, a triumph of pure and final evil: and were it not that the mind of hopeless unbelief usually permits the susceptibility of its affections to grow dull, and seeks protection from the gloom of its thoughts by a spontaneous incasement of insensibility, its impressions from death would be appalling. But though unbelief may be a natural cause of uncontrolled sorrow, it by no means follows that such sorrow implies unbelief. It is easy to say, that if we acknowledged God to be good in all his dispensations, and trusted in some blessed spirit secreted in the present loss, we could not deeply mourn. I ask, is it reasonable to expect this abstract conviction to overpower a visible privation? Assuage and sanctify the grief it unquestionably will; but to heal entirely is beyond its power. The vacancy in home and heart is a thing felt; its issue in good is a thing believed in and imagined; that the blessings of the past are gone, is a reality in the present; that they will be restored, is as yet but a vision in the future. The degree in which faith imparts consolation will somewhat depend on the natural vigour of the imaginative faculty: affliction is a pressure of actual experience; faith is a series of mental creations; its realities are invisible and intangible; a mind bound

down by the chain of experience, a mind whose memory is more faithful than its conceptions are excursive, will catch but faint and distant glimpses of the blessed idealities of hope. And without one moment's murmuring against the benignity of God, or doubt respecting his promised future, such a mind may be ill able to reach the ever-flowing fountain of his peace.

Nor is it less unjust to prefer against sorrow for the dead the charge of *selfishness*. Selfish! What, that pure affection bowed and broken to the earth! Yearning only to discharge again, were it possible, but the humblest service of love! What would it not do, what sacrifice of self would it not make, what toils, what watching, would it not hold light, might it be permitted to perform one office for the departed!—unseen, unfelt, unheard, without the hope of a requiting smile, to shed on that spirit one silent blessing! Surely this insult to human grief must be the invention of cold hearts, needing a justification for their own insensibility. True it is, there is no need to mourn for those who are removed. True it is, we weep not for them, but for ourselves and for our children. It is we only that suffer and are sad. But emotions are not selfish, simply because they are experienced *by* ourselves; were it so, every joy and sorrow would be branded by that odious name. They are selfish only when they are full of the idea of self,—when self is their object, as well as their subject; when they tempt us to prefer our own personal and exclusive happiness to that of others, and to trample on a brother's feelings in the chase after our own good. Of this there is nothing in the tears of bereavement; they are the tribute not of our self-regarding but of our sympathetic nature. At last indeed, when the burst of grief has had its natural way, they lead us to a

generous joy. For, as we weep, we think how blessed are the departed, who 'rest from their labours, while their works do follow them;' their pure hearts jarred no more by the harshnesses of this oft discordant life; their earnest minds drinking at the perennial fount of truth; their frailties cast away with the coil of mortality they have left behind; their sainted love waiting to receive us, as we too may one by one pass the dark limits which sever us from their embrace, and seek with them the peace and progress of the skies.

VI.
CHRISTIAN PEACE.

JOHN XIV. 27.

PEACE I LEAVE WITH YOU: MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU: NOT AS THE
WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU.

THIS was a strange benediction to proceed from the Man of Sorrows, at the dreariest moment of his life;—strange at least to those who look only to his outward career, his incessant contact with misery and sin, his absolute solitude of purpose, his lot stricken with sadness ever new from the temptation to the cross; but not strange perhaps to those who heard the deep and quiet tones in which this oracle of promise went forth,—the divinest music from the centre of the darkest fate. He was on the bosom of the beloved disciple, and in the midst of those who should have cheered him in that hour with such comforts as fidelity can always offer; but who, failing in their duty to his griefs, found the sadness creep upon themselves; while he, seeking to give peace to them, found it himself profusely in the gift. It was not till he had finished this interview and effort of affection, and from the warmth of that evening meal and the flush of its deep converse they had issued into the chill and silent midnight air, not till the sanctity of moonlight (never to be seen by him again) had

invested him, and coarse fatigue had sunk his disciples into sleep upon the grass, that, having none to comfort, he found the anguish fall upon himself. Deprived of the embrace of John, he flew to the bosom of the Father; and, after momentary strife, recovered in trust the serenity he had found in toil: and while his followers lie stretched in earthly slumber, he reaches a divine repose; while they, yielding to nature, gain neither strength nor courage for the morrow, he, through the vigils of agony, rises to that godlike power, on which mockery and insult beat in vain, and which has made the cross,—then the emblem of abjectness and guilt,—the everlasting symbol of whatever is Holy and Sublime.

The peace of Christ then was the fruit of combined *toil* and *trust*; in the one case diffusing itself from the centre of his active life, in the other from that of his passive emotions; enabling him in the one case to *do things* tranquilly, in the other to *see things* tranquilly. Two things only can make life go wrong and painfully with us; when we suffer or suspect misdirection and feebleness in the energies of love and duty within us, or in the Providence of the world without us: bringing, in the one case, the lassitude of an unsatisfied and discordant nature; in the other, the melancholy of hopeless views. From these Christ delivers us by a summons to mingled toil and trust. And herein does his peace differ from that which 'the world giveth,'—that its prime essential is not ease, but strife; not self-indulgence, but self-sacrifice; not acquiescence in evil for the sake of quiet, but conflict with it for the sake of God; not, in short, a prudent accommodation of the mind to the world, but a resolute subjugation of the world to the best conceptions of the mind. Amply has the promise

to leave behind him such a peace been since fulfilled. It was fulfilled to the apostles who first received it; and has been realized again by a succession of faithful men to whom they have delivered it.

The word 'Peace' denotes the absence of jar and conflict; a condition free from the restlessness of fruitless desire, the forebodings of anxiety, the stings of enmity. It may be destroyed by discordance between the lot without and the mind within, where the human being is in an obviously false position,—an evil rare and usually self-curative; or by a discordance wholly internal, among the desires and affections themselves. The first impulse of 'the natural man' is to seek peace by mending his external condition; to quiet desire by increase of ease, to banish anxiety by increase of wealth, to guard against hostility by making himself too strong for it; to build up his life into a fortress of security and a palace of comfort, where he may softly lie, though tempests beat and rain descends. The spirit of Christianity casts away at once this whole theory of peace; declares it the most chimerical of dreams; and proclaims it impossible ever to make this kind of reconciliation between the soul and the life wherein it acts. As well might the athlete demand a victory without a foe. To the noblest faculties of soul, rest is disease and torture. The understanding is commissioned to grapple with ignorance, the conscience to confront the powers of moral evil, the affections to labour for the wretched and oppressed: nor shall any peace be found till these, which reproach and fret us in our most elaborate ease, put forth an incessant and satisfying energy; till, instead of conciliating the world, we vanquish it; and rather than sit still, in the sickness of luxury, for it to amuse our perceptions, we precipitate ourselves upon it

to mould it into a new creation. Attempt to make all smooth and pleasant without, and you thereby create the most corroding of anxieties, and stimulate the most insatiable of appetites within. But let there be harmony within, let no clamours of self drown the voice which is entitled to authority there, let us set forth on the mission of duty, resolved to live for it alone, to close with every resistance that obstructs it, and march through every peril that awaits it: and in the consciousness of immortal power, the sense of mortal ill will vanish; and the peace of God well nigh extinguish the sufferings of the man. 'In the world we may have tribulation; in Christ we shall have peace.'

This peace, so remote from torpor,—arising indeed from the intense action of the greatest of all ideas, those of duty, of immortality, of God,—fell according to the promise on the first disciples. Not in vain did Jesus tell them in their sorrows that the Comforter would come: nor falsely did he define this blessed visitant, as 'the spirit of truth,'—the soul reverentially faithful to its convictions, and expressing clearly in action its highest aspirings. Such peace had Stephen: when before the Sanhedrim that was striving to hush up the recent story of the Cross, he proclaimed aloud the sequel of the Ascension; and priests and elders arose and stopped their ears and thrust him out to death;—he had this peace: else how,—if a heaven of divinest tranquillity had not opened to him and revealed to him the proximity of Christ to God,—how, as the stones struck his uncovered and uplifted head, could he have so calmly said, 'Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!' Such peace had Paul,—at least when he ceased to rebel against his noble nature, and became, instead of the emissary of persecution, the ambassador

of God. Was there ever a life of less ease and security, yet of more buoyant and rejoicing spirit, than his ? What weight did he not cast aside, to run the race that was set before him ? What tie of home or nation did he not break, that he might join in one the whole family of God ? For forty years the scoff of synagogues and the outcast of his people, he forgot the privations of the exile in the labours of the missionary ; flying from charges of sedition, he disseminated the principles of peace ; persecuted from city to city, he yet created in each a centre of pure worship and Christian civilization, and along the coasts of Asia, and colonies of Macedonia, and citadels of Greece, dropped link after link of the great chain of truth that shall yet embrace the world. Amid the joy of making converts, he had also the affliction of making martyrs ; to witness the sufferings, perhaps to bear the reproaches, of survivors ; with weeping heart to rebuke the fears, and sustain the faith of many a doubter ; and in solitude and bonds to send forth the effusions of his earnest spirit to quicken the life, and renovate the gladness, of the confederate churches. Yet when did speculation at its ease ever speak with vigour so noble, and cheerfulness so fresh, as his glorious letters ?—which recount his perils by land and sea, his sorrows from friend and foe, and declare that ‘none of these things move’ him ; which show him projecting incessant work, yet ready for instant rest ; conscious that already he has fought the good fight, and willing to finish his course and resign the field ; but prepared, if needs be, to grasp again the sword of the spirit, and go forth in quest of wider victories. Does any one suppose, that it would have been more peaceful to look back on a life less exposed and adventurous ?

on a lot sheltered and secured? on soft-bedded comfort, and unbroken plenty, and conventional compliance? No! it is only *beforehand* that we mistake these things for peace; in the retrospect we know them better, and would exchange them all for one vanquished temptation in the desert, for one patient bearing of the cross! What,—when all is over, and we lie upon the last bed,—what is the worth to us of all our guilty compromises, of all the moments stolen from duty to be given to ease? If Paul had cowered before the tribunal of Nero, and trembled at his comrades' blood, and, instead of baring his neck to the imperial sword, had purchased by poor evasions another year of life,—where would that year have been now?—a lost drop in the deep waters of time,—yet not lost, but rather mingled as a poison in the refreshing stream of good men's goodness by which Providence fertilizes the ages.

The peace of Christ, thus inherited by his disciples, and growing out of a living spirit of duty and of love, contrasts, not merely with guilty ease, but with that mere mechanical facility in blameless action which habit gives. There is something faithless and ignoble in the very reasoning sometimes employed to recommend virtuous habits. They are urged upon us, because they smooth the way of right: we are invited to them for the sake of ease. Adopted in such a temper, duty after all makes its bargain with indulgence, and is not yet pursued for its own sake and with the allegiance of a loving heart. Moreover, whoever has a true conscience sees that there is a fallacy in this persuasion: for, whenever habits become mechanical, they cease to satisfy the requirements of duty; the obligations of which enlarge indefinitely with our powers, demanding an undiminished tension of the will, and

an ever-constant life of the affections. It can never be, that a soul which has a heaven open to its view, which is stationed here, not simply to accommodate itself to the arrangements of this world, but also to school itself for the spirit of another, is intended to rest in mere automatic regularities. When the mind is thrown into other scenes, and finds itself in the society of the world invisible, suddenly introduced to the heavenly wise and the sainted good,—what peace can it expect from mere dry tendencies to acts no longer practicable, and blameless things now left behind? No; it must have that pure love which is nowhere a stranger, in earth or heaven; that vital goodness of the affections, which adjusts itself at once to every scene where there is truth and holiness to venerate; that conscience, wakeful and devout, which enters with instant joy on any career of duty and progress opened to its aspirations. And even in ‘the life that now is,’ the mere mechanist of virtue, who copies precepts with mimetic accuracy, is too frequently at fault, to have even the poor peace which custom promises. He is at home only on his own beat. An emergency perplexes him, and too often tempts him disgracefully to fly. He wants the inventiveness by which a living heart of duty seizes the resources of good, and uses them to the last; and the courage by which love, like honour, starts to the post of noble danger, and maintains it till, by such fidelity, it becomes a place of danger no more. It is a vain attempt to comprise in rules and aphorisms all the various moral exigencies of life. Hardly does such legality suffice to define the small portion of right and wrong contemplated in human jurisprudence. But the true instinct of a pure mind, like the creative genius of art, *frames* rules most perfect in the act of obeying them,

and throws the materials of life into the fairest attitudes and the justest proportions. He whose allegiance is paid to a mere preceptive system shapes and carves his duty into the homeliest of wooden idols: he who has the spirit of Christ turns it into an image breathing and divine. Children of God in the noblest sense, we are not without something of his creative spirit in our hearts. The power is there, to separate the light from the darkness within us, and set in the firmament of the soul luminaries to guide and gladden us, for seasons and for years; power to make the herbage green beneath our feet, and beckon happy creatures into existence around our path; power to mould the clay of our earthly nature into the likeness of God most High; and thus only have we power to look back in peace upon our work, and find a sabbath-rest upon the thought, that, morning and evening, all is good.

But the peace which Christ felt and bequeathed was the result of *trust*, no less than of toil. However immersed in action, and engaged in enterprises of conscience, every life has its passive moments, when the operation is reversed, and power, instead of going from us, returns upon us; and the scenes of our existence present themselves to us as objects of speculation and emotion. Sometimes we are forced into quietude in pauses of exhaustion or of grief; stretched upon the bed of pain, to hear the great world murmuring and rolling by; or lifted into the watch-tower of solitude, to look over the vast plain of humanity, and from a height that covers it with silence, observe its groups shifting and traversing like spirits in a city of the dead. At such times, our peace must depend on the view under which our faith or our fears may exhibit this mighty '*field of the world*;' on the forces of evil, of

fortuity, or of God, which we suppose to be secretly directing the changes on the scene, and calling up the brief apparition of generation after generation. And so great and terrible is the amount of evil, physical and moral, in the great community of men ; so vast the numbers sunk in barbarism, compared with the few who more nobly represent our nature ; so many and piercing (could we but hear them) the cries of unpitied wretchedness, which, with every beat of the pendulum, wander unnoticed into the air ; so dense the crowds that are thrust together in the deepest recesses of want, and that crawl through the loathsome hives of sin ; that only two men can look through the world without dismay : he, on the one hand, who, suffering himself to be bewildered with momentary horror, and in the confusion of his emotions, to mistake what he sees for a moral chaos, turns his back in the despair of fatalism, crying, ' Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die ; ' and he, on the other, who, with the discernment of a deeper wisdom, penetrates through the shell of evil to the kernel and the seed of good ; who perceives in suffering and temptation the *resistance* which alone can render virtue manifest, and conscience great, and existence venerable ; who recognizes, even in the gigantic growth of guilt, the grasp of infinite desires, and the perversion of godlike capacities ; who sees how soon, were God to take up his Omnipotence, and snatch from his creature man the care of the world and the work of self-perfection, all that deforms might be swept away, and the meanest lifted through the interval that separates them from the noblest ; and who therefore holds fast to the theory of hope, and the kindred duty of effort ; takes shelter beneath the universal Providence of God ; and seeing time enough in *his* vast cycles for



the growth and consummation of every blessing, can be patient as well as trust ; can resign the selfish vanity of doing all things himself, and making a finish before he dies ; and cheerfully *give* his life to build up the mighty temple of human improvement, though no inscription mark it for glory, and it be as one of the hidden stones of the sanctuary, visible only to the eye of God. Such was the spirit and the faith which Jesus left, and in which his first disciples found their rest. Within the infinitude of the divine mercy trouble did but fold them closer ; the perversity of man did but provoke them to put forth a more conquering love ; and though none were ever more the sport of the selfish interests and prejudices of mankind, or came into contact with a more desolate portion of the great wastes of humanity, *they* constructed no melancholy theories ; but having planted many a rose of Sharon, and made their little portion of the desert smile, departed in the faith, that the green margin would spread as the seasons of God came round, till the mantle of heaven covered the earth, and it ended with Eden as it had begun.

Between these two sources of Christian peace, virtuous toil and holy trust, there is an intimate connection. The desponding are generally the indolent and useless ; not the tried and struggling, but speculators at a distance from the scene of things, and far from destitute of comforts themselves. Barren of the most blessed of human sympathies, strangers to the light that best gladdens the heart of man, they are without the materials of a bright and hopeful faith. But he who consecrates himself sees at once how God may sanctify the world ; he whose mind is rich in the memory of moral victories will not easily believe the world a scene of *moral* defeats ; nor was it ever known that

one who, like Paul, laboured for the good of man, despaired of the benevolence of God.

Whoever then would have the peace of Christ, let him seek first the spirit of Christ. Let him not fret against the conditions which God assigns to his being, but reverently conform himself to them, and do and enjoy the good which they allow. Let him cast himself freely on the career to which the secret persuasion of duty points, without reservation of happiness or self; and in the exercise which its difficulties give to his understanding, its conflicts to his will, its humanities to his affections, he shall find that united action of his whole and best nature, that inward harmony, that moral order, which emancipates from the anxieties of self, and unconsciously yields the divinest repose. The shadows of darkest affliction cannot blot out the inner radiance of such a mind; the most tedious years move lightly and with briefest step across its history; for it is conscious of its immortality, and hastening to its heaven. And *there* shall its peace be consummated at length; its griefs transmuted into delicious retrospects; its affections fresh and ready for a new and nobler career; and its praise confessing that this final 'peace of God' doth indeed 'surpass its understanding.'

VII.

RELIGION ON FALSE PRETENCES.

JOHN XV. 16.

YE HAVE NOT CHOSEN ME, BUT I HAVE CHOSEN YOU.

ONE of the greatest difficulties which Christ encountered in his ministry, was to shake off the adherents who came to him on false pretences; and to reduce the motives of his disciples to the simple feeling of faith or fealty, which was the only tie he could endure to recognize. Some followed him because they 'did eat of the loaves and were filled.' The Sadducee enjoyed his invective against the Pharisee, and the Pharisee was willing to use his refutation of the Sadducee. The kind-hearted rich approved of the good he was doing among the poor; the severe delighted in his rebukes of the popular corruption; the patriotic looked to him as the ornament of his country and the marvel of his age; and only the fewest clung to him because they were 'of his sheep,' and knew and loved his voice. His many-sided wisdom turned some phase of excellence or wonder towards every spectator: and each in succession was worthy, not of less, but of far more, admiration than it received. Yet he declined the attachment of those who did not penetrate to the

central lines of all his truth and sanctity; refused to be judged by the outward appearance, rather than the inward principle of his life; never suffered himself to be regarded as an object of others' choice, but himself selected for his own such as were taken captive in soul by the power of so divine a spirit. Those who would not vow allegiance to him for his own sake, and take up for him the cross which he would bear for them, might go their way, and sorrowing feel that they were none of his.

This difficulty, of bringing the heart to a pure simplicity of faith, was no accident peculiar to the personal ministry of our Lord. Proceeding from causes which human nature reproduces in every age, it still interrupts the genuine influence of his religion: which multitudes hold and profess on false and insufficient grounds, adducing every variety of excuse for sanctioning its authority; but which few receive, as too great to be patronized, and too true to be proved. The ingenuity and restlessness of men are perpetually dissipating the primitive impressions of their reason and conscience, devising elaborate justifications of that which best justifies itself, and multiplying artificial foundations for that which is natural. And the evil is, that when the insecurity of all this comes to be detected, and the structure of our own erection is found to be crumbling beneath us, it is not easy to recover at once the genuine ground of nature. The simple perceptions and deep intuitions of the soul become so overlaid by acquired modes of thought and judgment, that all faith in them, nay, even all clear consciousness of them, is lost; and thus the original sources of all religious conviction are dried up. Some of the spurious forms and *second-hand imitations* of religious principle, always one

remove from the reality and sincerity of faith, I propose briefly to trace.

Religion is frequently degraded, not only by its practical supporters, but by its theoretical expounders, into a mere tool of expediency; and upheld as the most approved engine for the production of good morals and the maintenance of social order. Support is invited to it, on the ground that men are unmanageable without it; that, but for its powerful hold on the human mind, the elements of repulsion would become ascendant in the community, and dissipate it into a multitude of individual self-wills. It is a shameful spectacle, when its own representatives condescend to plead for it thus; and go ignominiously round, supplicating votes in its behalf, for the vacant office of Master of Police! What sort of obedience is likely to be rendered to a creature of our own appointment, chosen from prudence, and removable at pleasure? Nothing can be more evident than that such advocates are thinking only of restraining *others*, and are by no means filled with the idea of submission *themselves*. A heart occupied and softened by the genuine spirit of allegiance will make a quite different appeal; will never dream that any suffrage can add authority to the faith that rules it rightly; will perhaps think it somewhat irreligious for even the most important persons to offer to the Almighty the weight of their great influence; and will feel that things divine are so much higher than things serviceable, that to recommend them for their use is to deny their essence and disown their obligation. Nay, does not a secret voice assure us all, that short of the sacrifice of self-will, and the cheerful movement within the limits of a Supreme Law, there is *not even the faint* beginning of religion; and that

this concern for the common good, this idea of giving a sanction to the claims of piety, is an evasion of that *personal surrender*, which it is so easy to approve in others, so hard to achieve within ourselves? This temper feels as if it were *outside* the great and solemn conditions of humanity, and in concern for others' exposure to them lapses into forgetfulness itself; as if it had nothing to do with the strife of temptation, and the toil of duty, and the cry of grief. The complacent patron of religion,—will he not *die*? will he not go, all alone, into the silence of eternity, and personally look into the reality of those things of which he has always helped to keep up the show? Will he not stand face to face with the God whose service he has liberally encouraged?—empty, it is to be feared, of the only offering which he could tranquilly present,—the offer of *himself*; and thrown upon the Infinite, not as a child upon a parent's bosom, but as a penitent in abasement before the Judge?—Nor does this seem so distant, that there is much time to play at pretences with it in the meanwhile. As sure as this world is swimming fast through space and time, we are all afloat in the same life-vessel, and have moreover a voyage before us, of which even the stoutest heart may well think in earnest.

I do not, of course, mean that religious faith does not conduce to the moral order of society; or that estimable men may not innocently be aware of this and reckon on it. But I do say, that it is not upon this that the obligatory character of religion rests; that this social action is not the source, but the effect, of its binding authority upon the mind; and that to look first to its benefits, and then to its sanctity, is to invert *the true order of our moral life*, and set the pyramid

of duty upon its point rather than its base. If the great principles of religion were false, if it were all a fiction that we lived under a God and in front of a heaven, it is obvious that these beliefs would have no claim upon us; that their relation to our conscience would even be reversed; and that whatever support they might appear to afford to the laws of rectitude and peace, our sole duty to them, as delusions, would be to expose and expel them; the looser dictates of expediency yielding at once to the severer rule of veracity. And it is therefore not in their usefulness, but in their truth, that their authority resides; it is with that alone that our allegiance to them must stand or fall; to that alone that our souls are permitted to bow; nay, on that alone that all their moral excellence depends. A devout man does his duty better than another, because he sees his position more completely; gazes over the wide field of his relations visible and invisible; exaggerates nothing from its proximity, and overlooks nothing from its distance; but, with the clear sense of moral proportion, receives from all the true impression, and gives to all the fit affection. He does not render his mental view false by ignoring the whole region that lies beyond experience, and treating it as if it had no existence; or fever his passions and fret away his peace by imprisoning the whole energies of his nature within some narrow object,—a section only of the life which they are qualified to fill. It is because his *mind* is right, that his *hand* does right.

The same insult which is committed against religion by representing it as the tool of social order, is repeated, when it is prescribed as the only means of finding any semblance of comfort in circumstances *otherwise desperate*. No one can be ignorant that it is

frequently exhibited in this light ; and that men are advised to lay by a prudent store of it, as a resource of happiness during the dreary winter of distress. Nothing can be more true to nature than the fact alleged : nothing more false than the exhortation founded on it. Certain it is, there is no real conquest of evil, except by the devout mind, that can bleed beneath the thorny lot, yet clasp it in closer love, like the piercing crucifix of self-mortification upon the breast. Certain it is, that a pure trust, defying nothing that is sent of God, but bending with self-renunciation before his whirlwinds sweeping by, feels least resistance of terrible necessity chafing against its peace. But in mere cupidity for the comforts of faith there is no religion,—on the contrary, the total privation of all religion : there is precisely that deliberate reservation of self, that fencing of it round against the assaults of unhappiness, that mere service for hire, in which is the very essence of disloyalty to heaven. Nor does God ever award the least success to these insurance speculations on his service ; and only those who give themselves up to him without a question find their happiness returned. Vain every way are all these attempts to make that which is divine subordinate to our personal ends : we only bring down the awful rebuke, ‘ Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.’

Religion again is often represented, not exactly as the *instrument* for producing good morals, but as in fact *the very same* with good morals. We hear the sentiment constantly repeated, that, after all, the service of man is the truest service of God. Now if this maxim mean that so long as human good is effected, it does not signify *on what principles* it is done, no *statement* could well be more false. Let us only see.

Here is a man, who serves the commonwealth from ambition, and merits the goodwill of his neighbours, that he may mount by it. He selects some conspicuous utility, labours at it visibly enough, and defends himself from the aversion of the few by surrounding himself with the plaudits of the many : and if you look at him, busy before the face of his community, you will not fail to see the manner of his diligence ; that in proportion as they raise the shout, he prosecutes the work ; that when they are tired, he grows idle ; and when they can lift their voices no higher, and no more can be gained by labouring for their good, either he begins to toil in the opposite direction, or, throwing down all implements of work, gives himself up to strange gambols, at which the spectators who have exhausted all their praise may at least gratify him by being astonished. Here is *another* man, smitten, we will say, with honest pity for the degradation and misery of the great mass of every civilized society ; indignant, it may be (who can help it ?), that all citizens have not enough food and enough knowledge ; studious of the economic causes which interfere with such a result ; but unhappily seeing no farther than the mere sentient and intellectual man, and possibly dreaming that their oppression and wretchedness have been aggravated, instead of assuaged, by the restraints of the moral and the aspirations of the spiritual nature. You see him, accordingly, — a benignant thinking animal, — enthusiastically devoted to projects for making the life of man comfortable, intelligent, and clean ; primarily impressed with the necessity of increasing the productiveness of the earth ; and therefore secondarily, with the importance of improving man as the producing instrument ; trusting to a preternatural

development of the physical and rational faculties to supply some adequate counterfeit of moral order, that may look the same from outside the heart; transferring to personal interest the venerated dress and badges of duty, but really disowning any law higher than the collective forces of self-will; loosening any particular ties with which the feelings of mankind have connected a peculiar sacredness; and suppressing, as an unmeaning weakness, any sentiment above that of obtuse submission, in case of accident, to the operation of crushing and fracture by the disordered mechanism of nature. And *once* at least there has been a CHRIST; not seeking to thrust up human nature from below, but to raise it from above; knowing that its earth could produce nothing, except for its pure and spreading heaven; and so, coming down upon it, as an angel soul from the highest regions of the spirit; speaking seldom to it of its happiness, constantly of its holiness; dwelling little on the arrangements, and much on the responsibilities of life; pitying its woes, as it pities them itself in moments of truest aspiration, not with mere nervous sympathy, but with godlike and healing mercy; assuming its place in the midst of God, and on the surface of eternity, and from this sublime position as a base computing its obligations and uttering oracles of its destiny. Which now of these three, do you think, is truly *neighbour* to our poor nature, wounded and bleeding by the way? Which of them has really tended and restored it from being half dead? It is impossible to deny to even the least worthy of them the praise of rendering service to man—but can we say of them all that there is a service of God? Are all felt to be equally noble and venerable? or do we measure our *reverence* for them by the scale and service of their

operation? Is it not rather the different *principle* which is at the root of each that determines the sentiment we direct towards them? No one, I believe, sincerely feels that the simply humane and prosaic view of life and men, such as a naturalist or statist might take, is as true and high a source of benevolent action, as the reverential and divine, that commences with the spiritual relations, and thence descends to the economy of the outward lot. If then the maxim that the service of men is the truest service of God, is adduced to excuse the indifference of many an amiable heart to the great truths of faith, and to palliate the defects of a merely ethical benevolence; if it is the plea of social kindness to be let alone on the subject of diviner obligations, it cannot be admitted. But as self-justification is seldom deficient in ingenuity, there is a sense in which this aphorism is unquestionably true; in which indeed it does but contain the sentiment of the apostle: 'he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?' From the love of man we do not necessarily rise into the love of God; but from any true love of God we inevitably descend into the love of man,—his child, his image, the object of his benediction, and the sharer of his immortality. Nor is this maxim without an important application to our moral estimates of *others*, whose acts alone are exposed to view, and of whose secret motives and affections we cannot take cognizance. Wherever we see in our fellow-men the outward life which *may possibly* be the fruit of religious principle, though perhaps explicable as some inferior growth, we have certainly no right to deny the existence of the nobler root; but must accept their service of man as *presumption of their fidelity to God*. I only protest

against that self-flattery, which permits our good-nature towards earth to lull to sleep our aspirations to heaven.

Another spurious form of religion is discerned among those who regard it as an *indispensable ornament* of character ; who speak much of the incompleteness of human nature without it ; and plead the claims of piety on the ground that it is an offence against mental symmetry to be without it. The most palpable exhibition of this imitation of faith is found among those who, after craniological research, conceive that they have discovered a certain cerebral provision for a god ; and who therefore conclude that the culture of devotion is necessary to physiological consistency. They speak at large of man's need of a religion, of his unsatisfied wants without it ; of the grace which it adds to his moral stature, the dignity it gives to his affections, the power which it administers to his will : and then they issue orders to their ingenuity to devise a religion suitable to this discovered want, precisely adapted to the cravings of this appetite. Alas ! however, this is not the way in which a religion can be found : it cannot by any skill be thus carved and constructed according to measurements taken on purpose from our nature. It is easy indeed to *imagine and invent* a faith, seemingly just fitted to our wants ; but then comes the question, how are we to get it *believed* ? And here, it is to be feared, is the failure of this school : they seem to have more faith in the religiousness of man, than in the reality of God. The same danger attends the idea, wherever found, of aiming constantly at our own self-perfection, and, under the influence of this aim, striving to put the last and saintly finish of a pure devotion to *our* character. Surely there is something unsound and

morbid in thus resolving the whole idea of obligation and truth into that of beauty. As long as we are but painting our own ideal portrait, we can produce no living and substantial goodness, but a mere canvas thing of surface dimension only. Human character and life are something more than mere matters of taste and propriety; and will attain to nothing excellent till they are regarded in the spirit of an earnest reality. Devotion can find no firm foundation in the notion of its relative fitness to us, but must feel its foot on the absolute truth of its glorious and sublime objects. All else is abhorrent from the pure simplicity of faith, and tends only to foster an indifference to truth, and an affectation of religion. God, refusing to be discerned through the impure eye of expediency, reveals himself only to our inward intuitions of conscience. The piety that loves him will recognize no third thing between yea and no. To assume his reality, because the hypothesis seems to open the best training-school for our human nature; to treat the highest of all things as true, only because we want it to be true, and shall be the better for it if it is,—what is this but, under decent disguise, the French philosopher's characteristic exclamation, 'If there were not a God, we should have to invent one.' To an earnest mind this air of protection and appropriation towards things divine and holy is unspeakably offensive. It is for God to rule and guard our conscience, not for our conscience to take care of God. And to every pure submissive mind his voice within is heard rebuking this presumptuous spirit, and repeating the words of Christ. 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.'

VIII.

MAMMON-WORSHIP.

MATTHEW VI. 28.

CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD, HOW THEY GROW; THEY TOIL NOT,
NEITHER DO THEY SPIN; AND YET I SAY UNTO YOU, THAT SOLOMON, IN
ALL HIS GLORY, WAS NOT ARRAYED LIKE ONE OF THESE.

IN no time or country has Christianity ever been exhibited in its simple integrity. The soul of its author was the only pure and perfect expression of its spirit: it was at once the creature and the sole director of his mind;—born within that palace to be its Lord. In every other instance Christianity has been only one out of many influences concerned in forming the character of its professors; and they have given it various shapes, according to the climate, the society, the occupations in which they have lived. The prejudices and passions of every community,—the inevitable growth of its position,—have weakened its religion and morality in some points, and strengthened them in others. So that all particular Christianities are distortions of the great original: like paintings placed in a false light; or rather like those grotesque images seen in the concave surfaces of things, which,—lengthen or shorten as they may,—spoil the beauty that depends upon proportion. *The student will find in his religion the nutriment of*

divinest speculation,—the tenets of a sublime philosophy in which heaven resolves the great problems of duty, fate, and futurity ; and when his genius soars to the highest heaven of invention, he feels that he is borne upon his faith, as on eagle's wings. The patriot, cast on evil times, without a glimpse of these contemplative subtleties, sees in it the law of liberty,—hears in it a clear call, as from the trumpet of God, to vindicate the rights of the oppressed : he delights to read how Christ provoked bigots to gnash their teeth with rage, and Paul proclaimed that of one blood were all nations made. The peasant lays to heart its mercy to the poor, and its promise to the good. The merchant takes it as the root of uprightness : the artist visits it as the source of moral beauty the most divine. The system is edited anew in the mind of every class.

We live in a country whose national character is very marked, and on whose people certain prevailing habits and employments are imposed by a peculiar soil, a Northern climate, and an insular position. Various causes, both social and political, are filling England more and more with a manufacturing and mercantile population. The fact, taken in all its connections, is by no means to be deplored ; and in various ways comprises in it auguries of vast good. But in the meanwhile it is attended with this particular result : that the *spirit of gain* is ascendant over every other passion and pursuit by which men can be occupied. Not pleasure, not art, not glory, can beguile our people from their profits. War was their madness once ; but the temple of Moloch is deserted, and morning and evening the gates of Mammon are thronged now. *There* is the idol from whose seductions our Christianity has most to fear. Without indulging in any sentimental declamation

against the pursuit and influence of wealth, we may be permitted to feel; that *this* is the quarter from which, specifically, our moral and religious affections are most in danger of being vitiated. The habits which produce the danger may be inevitable, forced upon us by a hard social necessity: still in bare self-knowledge there is self-protection. For, the danger of a vice is not like the danger of a pestilence, in which the most unconscious are the most safe: the fear of contagion, which, in the one case absorbs the poison into the veins of the body, repulses in the other the temptation from the mind.

The excess to which this master-passion is carried, perverts our just and natural estimate of happiness. It cannot be otherwise when that which is but a means is elevated into the greatest of ends; when that which gives command over some physical comforts becomes the object of intenser desire than all blessings intellectual and moral, and we live to get rich, instead of getting rich that we may live. The mere lapse of years is not life: to eat and drink and sleep; to be exposed to the darkness and the light; to pace round in the mill of habit, and turn the wheel of wealth; to make reason our book-keeper, and turn thought into an implement of trade,—this is not life. In all this, but a poor fraction of the consciousness of humanity is awakened: and the sanctities still slumber which make it most worth while to be. Knowledge, truth, love, beauty, goodness, faith, alone give vitality to the mechanism of existence; the laugh of mirth that vibrates through the heart, the tears that freshen the dry wastes within, the music that brings childhood back, the prayer that calls the future near, the doubt which makes us meditate, the death which startles us with

mystery, the hardship which forces us to struggle, the anxiety that ends in trust,—are the true nourishment of our natural being. But these things, which penetrate to the very core and marrow of existence, the votaries of riches are apt to fly; they like not anything that touches the central and immortal consciousness; they hurry away from occasions of sympathy into the snug retreat of self; escape from life into the pretended cares for a livelihood; and die at length busy as ever in preparing the means of living.

With a large and, I fear, a predominant class among us, it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that money 'measurcth all things,' and is more an object of ambition than any of the ends to which it affects to be subservient. It is the one standard of value, which gives estimation to the vilest things that have it, and leaves in contempt the best that are without it. It is set up as the *measure of knowledge*; for is it not notorious that no intellectual attainments receive a just appreciation, but those which may be converted into gold; that this is the rule by which, almost exclusively, parents compute the worth of their children's education, and determine its character and extent? It is not enough that the understanding burns with generous curiosity for the conquest of some new science, or the fancy for some new accomplishment; it is not enough that a study is needed to brace the faculties with health, or illumine the imagination with beauty, or agitate the heart with high sympathies; 'but what is the use of it?' is the question still asked,—as if it were not use enough, instead of a trader to make a man. Research and speculation which do not visibly tend to the production of wealth are regarded by all, except the classes engaged in their pursuit, as the dignified frivolities of

whimsical men ; and though they may bear the torch into the darkness of antiquity, or open some unexplored domain of nature, they must not expect more than a cold tolerance. Still worse ; money with us is the *measure of morality* ; for those parts and attributes of virtue are in primary esteem which are conducive to worldly aggrandizement ; and it is easy to perceive that no others are objects of earnest and hearty ambition. Industry and regularity, and a certain easy amount of pecuniary probity, being indispensable instruments of prosperity, the great moral forces of trade, are in no country held in higher worth ; but the amenities which spread a grace over the harsher features of life, the clear veracity that knows truth and profit to be incommensurable things, and the generous affections whose coin is in sympathy as well as gold, are the objects of but slight care, and slighter culture. The current ideas of human nature and character are graduated by the same rule, and err on the side, not of generosity, but of prudence. The experienced are habitually anxious to give the young such an estimate of mankind, as may prove, not the most true, but the most profitable,—an estimate so depressed into caution as to be altogether below justice. To escape one or two possible rogues, we must suppose nobody true ; for the sake of pecuniary safety, we must submit to the moral wretchedness of universal distrust, and blacken the great human heart for our private ease ; as if it were not better to run the risk of ruin, than grow familiar with so vast a lie ; happier to be bankrupt in wealth than in the humanities. But alas ! with us, money is the *measure of all utility* ; it is this which constitutes the real though disguised distinction between the English notions of theory and practice. A truth may be in the

highest degree grand and important, may relieve many a cold and heavy doubt, and open many a fair and brilliant vision ; but unless it has some reference to money, it is pronounced a mere theory. A social improvement may be suggested, which promises to remove some absurd anomaly, to assert some comprehensive principle, or annihilate some sufferings of mere feeling ; but because it has no direct relation to the mechanism of property, it is set aside as not practical. By an unnatural abuse of terms, ' practical men ' are, with us, not those who study the bearing of things on human life in its widest comprehension, but those who value everything by its effect upon the purse.

In obedience to the same dominant passion, vast numbers spend their term of mortal service in restless and uneasy competition, in childish struggles for a higher place in the roll of opulence or fashion, in jealousies that gnaw to the very heart of luxury, in ambition that spoils the present splendour by the shadow of some new want. Happy they of simpler feelings, who have taken counsel of a pure nature about the economy of good ; who know from what slight elements the hand of taste can weave the colours into the web of life, and from what familiar memories the heart draws the song of cheerfulness as the work proceeds ; who find no true pleasure marred because it is plebeian, nor any indulgence needful because decreed by custom ; who discern how little the palace can add to the sincere joy of a loving and a Christian home, and feel that nature dwells at the centre after all ; who have the firmness to retire to that inner region, and embrace the toils of reason, the labours of sympathy, the strife of conscience, the exhaustless ambition of Duty, as Heaven's

own way to combine the divinest activity with the profoundest repose.

The prevalent occupations of the community in which we live have a tendency to pervert our moral sentiments and social affections, no less than our estimates of happiness. In a society so engrossed by ideas connected with property, so eternally dwelling on the distinction of *meum* and *tuum*, men naturally learn to think and speak of all things in the language belonging to this relation; to use it as an illustration of matters less familiar to them, and apply its imagery and analogies to subjects of a totally different character. Over their property the authority of law gives them absolute right and control; no man may touch it with his finger, or call them to account for its disposal. I need not stop to acknowledge, what is too plain for any one to doubt, that this sanctity of property from invasion is, to any society, the very cement of its civilization. Yet there is an unquestionable danger of giving this notion of irresponsible possession an application beyond its proper range; of permitting the sense of legal right to creep insensibly into the domain of moral obligation, and spread there the feeling of personal self-will, and set up the caprices of inclination for the deliberations of duty. Men are exceedingly apt to imagine, that nothing can be seriously *wrong*, which they have a *right* to do; to forget that the licence which is allowed by law may be sternly prohibited by morality. How little concern does any wise and conscientious principle appear to have with the expenditure of private revenue, especially where that revenue is the largest! How despotically there do mere whim and chance suggestion appear to reign! How wastefully are the elements of human enjoyment squandered in

pernicious luxuries, or dissipated in random experiments of benevolence, of which a little knowledge beforehand might have taught the result just as well as the failure afterwards! And if ever a gentle remonstrance is insinuated, how instantly does the vulgar and ignorant feeling leap forth, 'And may I not do what I like with my own?' No, you may not, unless your liking and your duty are in happy accordance. Morally you are as much bound to distribute your own wealth wisely, as to abstain from touching another man's; bound by the very same fundamental reasons, which forbid the privation of human enjoyment no less than the creation of human misery. As large a portion of well-being may be sacrificed by an act of wilful extravagance as by the commission of a dishonesty: and were it of a nature to be definable by law, would merit as severe a punishment. Shall anything then deter us from saying that such self-indulgence is a thief?

But the feelings which are entertained towards property,—the feelings of absolute and irresponsible control,—are very apt to extend to whatever it can purchase and procure; and unhappily, to the services of those human beings who yield us their labour for hire. There is nothing over which a man exercises such uncontrolled power as his purse; and (where no principle of justice and benevolence intervenes) but one remove from this despotism are placed his dependants. In them the right of every human being to be appreciated according to his moral worth is forgotten; and the rule by which they are judged is, their mechanical use to the master, not their excellence in themselves. That they are responsible agents (except to their employers), that they have an intelligence receptive of truth,

hearts that may shelter gentle sympathies, and a work of duty to carry on beneath the eye of God, that their bodies are of the same clay and their life constructed of the same vicissitudes as ours,—are thoughts that too seldom occur to lead us to consult their feelings, to allow for their temptations, to respect their conscience and improvement, as would become a fraternal and a Christian heart. How hardly are they judged! By how much more rigid a rule than that which we apply to our friends or to ourselves! What order, what punctuality, what untiring industry, what equanimity of temper, what abstinent integrity, is imperiously and mercilessly demanded by many a master, lax, and lazy, and passionate himself! O with what biting indignation have I seen those most wretched of educated beings, the governess in a family and the usher in a school, worked to the bone without the help of a sympathy, moving in perpetual rotation, with no feeling but of the daily whirl, and of incessant friction upon all that is most tender in their nature; expected to have all perfections, intellectual and moral, and to dispense with the respect which is their natural due; copiously blamed for what is wrong, but scantily praised for what is right; paid, but never cheered; and when worn threadbare at last, put away as one of the cast-off shreds of society, that only deforms the house filled with purple and fine linen. This is the consequence of that state of things in which (to use the words of a Church Dignitary, who could find it in his heart to write them without a syllable of regret or rebuke) ‘poverty is infamous;’ and in which knowledge and virtue weigh nothing against gold. Let the children of labour remember, that they are of the class which he of Nazareth dig-

nified ; that, peradventure, in his youthful days of mechanic toil, he too was looked on by the coarse eye of sheer power ; and yet nurtured, amid indignities and neglect, the spirit that made him divinely wise.

The despotic temper which is apt to be engendered by wealth in one direction, is naturally connected with servility in the opposite. For the very same reason that we regard those who are beneath us almost as if they were our property, we must regard ourselves almost as if we were the property of those above us. There is little, I fear, that is intellectual or moral in that sort of independence which is the proverbial characteristic of our countrymen ; it consists either in mere churlishness of manner, or in overbearing tyranny to those of equal or lower grade. It would be inconsistent not to yield that respect to the purse in others, which men are fond of claiming for it in themselves ; and accordingly it is to be feared that in few civilized countries is there so much sycophancy as in this ; so many creatures ready to crawl round a heap of gold ; so many insignificant shoals gleaming around every great ship that rides over the surface of society. It is a grievous evil arising hence, that the judgments and moral feelings of society lose their clear-sightedness and power ; that the same rules are not applied to the estimate of rich and poor ; that there is a rank which almost enjoys immunity from the verdict of a just public sentiment, where the most ordinary qualities receive a mischievous adulation, and even grave sins are judged lightly or not at all. But it is a more grievous ill that the witchery thus strikes with a foul blight the true manhood of the children of God ;—the manhood, not of limbs or life, but of a spirit free and pure ;—of an understanding open to all truth, and venerating it too

deeply to love it except for itself, or barter it for honour or for gold; of a heart enthralled by no conventionalisms, bound by no frost of custom, but the perennial fountain of all pure humanities; of a will at the mercy of no tyrant without and no passion within; of a conscience erect under all the pressure of circumstances, and ruled by no power inferior to the everlasting law of Duty; of affections gentle enough for the humblest sorrows of earth, lofty enough for the aspirings of the skies. In such manhood, full of devout strength and open love, let every one that owns a soul see that he stands fast; in its spirit, at once humane and heavenly, do the work, accept the good, and bear the burdens of his life. Its healthful power will reveal the sickness of our selfishness, and recall us from the poisonous level of our luxuries and vanities to the reviving breath and the mountain heights of God. There could be no deliverer more true than he who should thus emancipate himself and us. O blessed are they who, for the peace and ornament of life, dare to rely, not on the glories which Solomon affected, but on those which Jesus loved;—glories which even God may behold with complacency,—nay, in which he shines himself; glories of nature, richer than of man's device; genuine graces, resembling the inimitable beauties of the lilies of the field, painted with the hues of heaven, while bending over the soil of earth.

IX.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITHIN US

PART I.

MATTHEW IV. 17.

FROM THAT TIME JESUS BEGAN TO PREACH, AND TO SAY, REPENT, FOR
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.

By the kingdom of Heaven was meant reformation upon earth. Whatever difficulties there may be in filling up the precise picture which the phrase would bring before the mind of a Jewish audience, it was unquestionably the Hebrew formula for the expected golden age, and was the popular symbol to denote perfected society; the final ascendancy of truth, justice, and peace; the expulsion of misery and wrong; the eternal reign of all that is divine over the world. This theocratic revolution was expected speedily, when the words of the text were uttered. On the supposed eve of such a change, which would itself bring remedies for every imaginable ill, physical and moral, all earnest efforts at social amelioration might appear to be superseded; the nearer the crisis of reparation, the shorter would be the triumphs of oppression, and the feebler the mischiefs of sin: nay, if corruption ripens for judgment, a more vehement outblaze of human crime might even be welcomed by some, as likely to hasten the interposition which was

to quench and to regenerate. The appropriate lesson of the hour might be thought to be one of passive watchfulness; to lie in wait for the hoped-for redemption; to relax even the accustomed energies of life and duty, as on a world grown old; and, in the words of one writing under the influence of this very expectation, to let 'him that is unjust, be unjust still; him that is filthy, be filthy still; him that is righteous, be righteous still; him that is holy, be holy still; for the time is at hand.

Instead of this, however, the great prophet of the hour draws the opposite inference; and utters the exhortation short and sharp, 'Repent!' A life of worldly acquiescence, of selfish habit, of unloving and barren ease, will not do, he conceives, for the kingdom of Heaven; which, be it what it may, is no system of mechanism for forcing men to be wise and good without any trouble, but a social state accruing from wisdom and excellence previously formed; not a scene from which souls acquire sanctity, but one to which they give it. Personal repentance, the transference of the life from conventionalism to conviction, the kindling of pure and productive affections, must precede and usher in the reign of God upon the earth; men must truly venerate the Deity within them, and he will not be slow to descend with his peace on society around them. The holy and divine must first be recognized and enshrined in the individual and private heart; and then will follow its wider conquests over humanity. *There* is the home and citadel of its strength, from which it sallies forth to win its public triumphs, and establish its general rule; *there* the centre whence its influence radiates, till it embraces and penetrates even the outlying margin of barbarism and sin.

Christ, then, whose voice is Christianity, addresses himself first to the individual conscience; indulges in no dreams of a renovated world without, till he has flung his appeal to the man within; looks *there* for the creative and vital forces, which are to make all things new. He speaks to his hearers, not as to passive creatures who might look about them for some position in which it might befall them to be good, but as to beings conscious of internal power to strive and win the excellence they love; to grapple athletically with the oppositions of circumstance; and run the appointed race, though with panting breast and bleeding feet. Herein, I conceive, did Christ preach a gospel wholly at variance with the prevailing temper and philosophy of our times. It is their tendency not to excite men to become what they ought to be, but to manage them as they are. The age has been prolific (like many of its predecessors) in inventions and proposed social arrangements, by which we may sit still and be made into the right kind of men; which will render duty the smoothest thing on earth, by warning all interfering motives off the spot, and turn the Christian race into a stroll upon a mossy lawn. The trust and boast of our period is not in its individual energy and virtue, not in its great and good minds, but in its external civilization, in schemes of social and political improvement, in things to be done *for* us, rather than *by* us; in what we are to *get*, more than in what we are to *be*. We have had systems of education, which were to mould the minds of our children into a perfection that would make experience blush; systems of self-culture, to nurse our faculties into full maturity; systems of socialism, for mending the whole world, and presenting every one with a virtuous mind, without the least trouble on his part. Even those who

escape this enthusiasm of system, are apt to place an extravagant trust in sets of outward circumstances; and dazzled by the splendid forms which modern civilization assumes, to conceive of them as powers in themselves, independently of the minds that fill and use them. Commerce, mechanical art, and more reasonably, but still with some error, the school and the printing-press, are each in turn cited as in themselves securing the indefinite progress of nations and mankind. It would be absurd to doubt that these causes operate with constant and beneficent power on the mind of a people; but on this very account an exclusive and irrational reliance may be placed upon them. It is obvious that two methods exist, of aiming at human improvement,—by adjusting circumstances without and by addressing the affections within; by creating facilities of position, or by developing force of character; by mechanism or by mind. The one is institutional and systematic, operating on a large scale; reaching individuals circuitously and at last; the other is personal and moral, the influence of soul on soul, life creating life, beginning in the regeneration of the individual and spreading thence over communities; the one, in short, reforming from the circumference to the centre, the other from the centre to the circumference. And in comparing these it is not difficult to show the superior triumphs of the latter, which was the method of Christ and Christianity. Indeed the great peculiarity of the Christian view of life is to be found in its preference of the inward element over the outward; its reliance upon the least showy and most deep buried portions of society for the evangelizing of the world; and still more upon the profoundest and most faintly whispered sentiments of the soul for the regeneration of the indi-

vidual. It forbids us to say, 'Lo, here!' or 'Lo, there!' and assures us that 'the kingdom of God is within' us.

In attributing the sanctification and moral growth of personal character to an agency *from within*, Christianity is surely confirmed by experience. Rarely do these blessed changes originate in any peculiarities of the individual's lot, visibly favourable;—else from a knowledge of his circumstances, we should be able to predict the history of his mind. Most often they arise, without any marked revolution in his condition, from secret and untraceable workings of the soul, from native forces of the inner man, merely taking from external circumstances an excuse for breaking into energy,—an excuse which a thousand different situations would have supplied as well. Feeble minds, in apology for their puny growth or premature decay in excellence, complain of the climate in which God has planted them; but where there is any vigour of life, the good seed will not wait to burst, till it be removed to some sunny slope or luxuriant garden of the Lord: give it but a lodgment on the rock, and feed it with the melting snow, and it will start a forest on the hills, climbing with giant feet, fast as the seasons can make steps. Whatever truth there may be in the doctrine of circumstances, when applied on a large scale to tribes of men,—however certain it may be that national character is changed by the insensible influences of national condition,—the application of the notion by individuals to their own case is almost always fallacious; and the very fact of their throwing upon their fate the blame of their own faithlessness and sin, is a sure symptom that *they* have not the living conscience which would turn a better lot into a better life. The souls that would really be richer in

duty in some new position, are precisely those who borrow no excuses from the old one; who even esteem it full of privileges, plenteous in occasions of good, frequent in divine appeals, which they chide their graceless and unloving temper for not heeding more. Wretched and barren is the discontent that quarrels with its tools instead of with its skill; and, by criticising Providence, manages to keep up complacency with self. How gentle should we be, if we were not provoked; how pious, if we were not busy; the sick would be patient, only he is not in health; the obscure would do great things, only he is not conspicuous! Nay, the infatuation besets us more closely still, and tempts us to expect wonders from some altered posture of our affairs totally inadequate to their production. What we neglect in summer is to be done in winter; what present interruptions persuade us to forego is to be gloriously achieved at some coming period of golden leisure, when confusion is to cease, and life to be set into an order unattainable yet. As if time and change, which should be our servants, and made to do the bidding of our conscience, were to be waited on by our servile will; as if the pusillanimous submission, once made, could be at once recalled. No; as the captive of old was carried off from the field of battle to the field of slavery, the vanquished soul becomes temptation's serf, and, after tears and repinings, learns to be cheerful at the toil of sin. Once let a man insult the majesty of Duty, by waiting till its commands shall become easy, and he must be disowned as an outlaw from her realm. If he calculates on this or that happy influence which is to shape him into something nobler; if he once regards his moral nature, not as an authoritative power *invested* within its sphere with a divine omnipotence

that speaks and it is done, but as passive material to be worked by the ingenuity of circumstances into somewhat that is good,—it is all over with him; the ascendancy of conscience is gone; collapse and ruin have begun. The mind has fallen into contentment with the mere conception,—the feeble and far-off imagination of excellence; confounds the look of duty, which indeed is a fair vision, with the strife and effort, the weary tension of resolve, the doubt, the prayers, the tears, which may bring our Christian manhood to exhaustion. Pleasant is it to entertain the picture of ourselves in some future scene, planning wisely, feeling nobly, and executing with holy triumph of the will; but 'tis a different thing,—not in the green avenues of the future, but in the hot dust of the present moment,—not in the dramatic positions of the fancy, but in the plain prosaic *now*,—to do the duty that waits and wants us, and put forth an instant and reverential hand to the noon-day or the evening task. It is a vain attempt,—that of the Epicurean moralist: to '*endure hardness*' is the needful condition of every service, and above all, for the good 'soldier of Christ;' and no man can try his utmost, with comfort to himself. Without great effort was nothing worthy ever achieved; and he who is never conscious of any strong lift within the mind, may know that he is a cumberer of the ground.

This weak reliance then on outward occasions and influences for moral improvement is always ineffectual. And it is the constant experience of those who indulge in it, that to postpone the season is to perpetuate the sin. Instead of being lifted easily by the mechanism of new and more powerful motives into a higher life, the most overwhelming vicissitudes sweep over them, and *after beating* upon their defenceless affections,

leave them where they were ; not invigorated into effort, but simply wasted by passive anguish : just as danger, which may but reveal to the strong his strength, will sink the paralytic into death. But where, on the contrary, the soul rests, with implicit dependence, not on outward opportunities, but on inward convictions, on some venerated idea of right, there is the true germ of spiritual life, the element of a mighty power. This repose upon a supreme ideal as the only real is the true Christian faith ; and he that has it, though it be little as a grain of mustard-seed, is able to cast the mountain into the sea. For, its force depends not on the greatness or rarity of the thoughts which enter into it ; the simplest faith, be it only deep and trustful, the very smallest idea of a mission in life assigned by God, be it only lovingly and clearly seen, 'lifteth the poor out of the dust,' and 'to them that have no might increaseth strength.' As of old it banished disease, and couched the blind, and soothed the maniac, by miracles of power, so does it still heal and bless by its miracles of love. Who has not seen the frequent transformation it effects in the wayward, frivolous, self-indulgent child, when some living point has been touched within the heart ; how it seems to create wisdom, experience, energy, and serenity at a stroke, and teaches her best to administer the daily and nightly medicine of an unspeakable affection to the sufferings of a sick brother, or the infirmities of an aged parent. It puts a divine fire into the dullest soul, and draws in Saul also among the prophets ; it turns the peasant into the apostle, and the apostle's meanest follower into the martyr.

I have spoken of the *sudden* change of mind effected by a newly-opened faith. In the primitive Christian doctrine such change plainly seems to have been recog-



nized as possible. And in spite of all that philosophers have written, with some truth but not the whole truth, respecting the power of habit, and the slow and severe pace of moral improvement and recovery, and the impossibility of abrupt conversion, I believe there is a profound reality in the opposite and popular belief;—as indeed there must be in all popular beliefs respecting matters of mental experience. It is quite true that instantaneous regeneration of the mind is not a phenomenon of the commoner sort, especially in the present day: but it is also true, that of all the remarkable moral recoveries that occur, (alas! too few at best,) almost the whole are of this kind. It is quite true that the upward efforts of the will, when it exchanges the madness of passion for the perceptions of reason, are toilsome, and, if successful, tardy; and if all transformations of conscience were of the deliberate and reasonable sort, philosophers could not say too much about their infrequency and slowness. But the process springs from a higher and more powerful source; the persuasion is conducted by some new and intense affection, some fresh and vivid reverence, followed, not led, by the conscience and reason. The weeds are not painfully plucked up by the cautious hand of tillage reckoning on its fruits, but burnt out by the blaze of a divine shame and love. It is quite true that such a change cannot be expected,—that to calculate on it is inexpressibly perilous; for the deeper movements of the soul shrink back from our computations, refuse to be made the tools of our prudence, and insist on coming unobserved or coming never; and he that reckons on them sends them into banishment, and only shows that they are and must be strangers to his barren heart. It is quite true that self-cure is of all things the most

arduous; but that which is impossible *to the man within us*, may be altogether possible *to the God*. In truth, the denial of such changes, under the affectation of great knowledge of man, shows an incredible ignorance of men. Why, the history of every great religious revolution, such as the spread of Methodism, is made up of nothing else; the instances occurring in such number and variety, as to transform the character of whole districts and vast populations, and to put all scepticism at utter defiance. And if some more philosophic authority is needed for the fact, we may be content with the sanction of Lord Bacon, who observed that a man reforms his habits either all together or not at all. Deterioration of mind is indeed always gradual; recovery usually sudden; for God, by a mystery of mercy, has established this distinction in our secret nature,—that while we cannot, by one dark plunge, sympathize with guilt far beneath us, but gaze at it with recoil till intermediate shades have rendered the degradation tolerable,—we are yet capable of sympathizing with moral excellence and beauty infinitely above us; so that while the debased may shudder and sicken at even the true picture of themselves, they can feel the silent majesty of self-denying and disinterested duty. With a demon can no man feel complacency, though the demon be himself; but God can all spirits reverence, though his holiness be an infinite deep. And thus the soul, privately uneasy at its insincere state, is prepared, when vividly presented with some sublime object veiled before, to be pierced as by a flash from Heaven with an instant veneration, sometimes intense enough to fuse the fetters of habit and drop them to the earth whence they were forged. The mind is ready, like a liquid on the eve of crystallization, to

yield up its state on the touch of the first sharp point, and dart, over its surface and in its depths, into brilliant and beautiful forms, and from being turbid and weak as water, to become clear as crystal, and solid as the rock.

Meanwhile, though acknowledging, for the sake of truth and the understanding of God's grace, the possibility and reality of such changes, we must remember that, like all vicissitudes of the affections, they neither come at the direct command of our will, nor descend on those who watch for external influences to produce them. There are those who go about in passive waiting for a call from heaven; who try this, and try that, and say, 'Lo here!' and 'Lo there!' And they find that 'the kingdom of God cometh not of observation.' Wanting to be holy, for the sake of being happy, they shall assuredly be neither; unless first the crust of their selfish nature is broken by affliction, and bending the head upon the shrine of sorrow, they cry with a contrition that forgets to be happy,—a cry that, it may be, the Divine Spirit will not despise. The kingdom of God is within us. In the latency of every soul there lurks, among the things it loves and venerates, some earnest and salient point, whence a divine life may be begun and radiate; some incipient idea of duty, it may be, some light mist of disinterested love, appearing vague and nebulous and infinitely distant within the mighty void,—a broken fringe of holy light, seen only in the spirit's deepest darkness: and therein may be the stirrings of a mystic energy, and the haze may be gathered together, and glow within the mind into a star,—a sun,—a piercing eye of God. But wherever the Deity dwelleth within us, he will be unfelt and a stranger to us till we abandon ourselves to the duties

and aspirations which we feel to be his voice ; till we renounce ourselves, and unhesitatingly precipitate our life on the persuasion of our disinterested affections. While his ' Spirit bloweth where it listeth,' yet certain it is that they only who do his will shall ever feel his power.

X.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD WITHIN US.

PART II.

MATTHEW IV. 17.

FROM THAT TIME JESUS BEGAN TO PREACH, AND TO SAY, REPENT; FOR
THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS AT HAND.

THAT the reformation and improvement of individual character proceeds from within, not from without; that it usually dates, not from any change in the condition and circumstances of life, but from the birth of some indigenous idea or affection in the mind, is the doctrine which I endeavoured to establish in the preceding discourse. However natural may be our reliance on external influences and marked transitions in our lot, as facilities for a change of mind, that reliance was shown to be delusive, and even to originate in a state of feeling, which itself forbids the change. A new and regenerative affection, wherever it finds root, springs up (like a kingdom of God within us), 'not with observation,' but silently and unconsciously; from suggestions seemingly slight or even untraceable; with power often sudden and triumphant; in a seat within the soul profound and central; whence a

transforming force radiates over the whole character to its very form and visible expression.

From the case of an individual man, we will now pass to that of multitudes. In societies, the order of reformation will be found to be the same ;—from the centre to the circumference ; from a solitary point deep buried and unnoticed, first to the circumjacent region, and then over the whole service ; from the native force and inspired insight of some individual mind, that kindles, first itself, and then, by its irresistible intensity, a wider and wider sphere of souls ; spirit being born of spirit, life of life, thought of thought. A higher civilization, by which I understand neither superior clothes, nor better houses, nor richer wines, nor even more destructive gunpowder, but a nobler system of ideas and aspirations possessing a community, must commence, where alone ideas and aspirations can have a beginning, in somebody's mind. Hence, of all the more remarkable social revolutions, the seminal principle, the primitive type, may be traced to some one man, whose spiritual greatness had force enough to convert generations and constitute an era in the world's life ; who preached with power some mighty repentance or transition of sentiment within the hearts of men, and thus rendered more near at hand that ' kingdom of Heaven,' for which all men sigh and good men toil. Private ' repentance,' individual moral energy, deep personal faith in some great conception of duty or religion, are the pre-requisites and causes of all social amelioration.

It might appear a waste of breath to make assertion of so plain a truth as this, were it not for the disposition of men to invert this order, to plan new systems of *society* in order to perfect the individual, instead of

seeking in the individual conscience the germ of a nobler form of society. Every vice and grievance, every evil, physical and moral, which may afflict any class of a community, is apt to be charged exclusively upon faulty institutional arrangements ; upon laws or the want of laws ; on forms of government ; on economical necessity ; on some external causes which lift off the weight of responsibility from the individual will, and make men passive and querulous under wrong, instead of active and penitent. Their aspirations are turned outwards, rather than inwards ; become complaints instead of efforts ; and spoil their tempers instead of ennobling their energies. They must have the world mended, before they can be expected to be better than they are : they reverse the solemn exhortation of my text ; and propose to make a stir to get the ' kingdom of Heaven ' established first ; and then repentance and moral renovation will follow of course. The machinery of human motives being, we are sometimes assured, altogether out of order, the manufacture of characters is unavoidably far from satisfactory. And not unfrequently a truly surprising amount of faith is manifested in the skill of certain moral mechanists, who promise to rectify the disorder, and form for us the only true specimens of men. Self-interest is the one force by which all speculators of this class propose to animate their new framework of society ; its application being ingeniously distributed so as to maintain an unerring equilibrium, and smoothly execute the work of duty. A hard-worked power is this Self-interest ; by which vulgar minds, in schools of philosophy or in councils of state, have from an early age thought to subdue and manage men ; but from which, time after time, they have broken loose in startling and remarkable ways.

Against this reliance for human improvement on institutions and economical organization, apart from agencies internal and spiritual, Providence and history enter a perpetual protest. And it behoves all wise men to add their voices too : the more so, because it is the tendency of our times rather to criticise society, than to ennoble and sanctify individuals ; to apply trading analogies to great questions of human improvement ; to place as implicit a faith in the omnipotence of self-interest in morals as of steam in the arts ; forgetting that between the grossest and the most refined form of this principle, there can only be the difference between the cannibal and the epicure. Let us not glorify the body of civilization, and overlook its soul ; and while luxuriating in its fruits, neglect the waters at its secret root.

The systematic socialist, who is confident he ' can explain the origin of evil,' and no less sure that he can remove it by a kind of mental engineering or exact computation of human wants and desires, is the extreme exemplification of this spirit. In order to indicate the fallacy of his scheme, it is not necessary to travel beyond his own class of illustrations. He perpetually calls the arrangements into which he proposes to fit the world, a ' machine.' In every machine there is a power to move, and a resistance to be overcome : and in this particular project for curing the errors and perfecting the minds of men, it is clear that the social organization is relied upon as the *power* to repress the human passions and will, considered as *resistance*. Yet, as organization is nothing in itself, but merely a disposition of parts through which force may be transmitted from point to point, no effect can ensue till it is filled and animated with some energy *not its own* : nor in this case can the boasted engine



of improvement be worked but by the very minds it is intended to control: and the power and the resistance being thus the same, the machine must stand still, as certainly as the inventions on which sciologists waste their ingenuity for producing perpetual motion and self-revolving wheels. Or, to take an illustration from morals rather than from physics, it is the same mistake, by which a disorderly mind expects to acquire faithfulness and punctuality of conscience from a neatly-arranged list of employments, and well-filled scheme for the disposal of the hours. While the force of good resolve which produced the list remains, the self-made law continues to be obeyed, and the program looks up with a grave and venerable authority. But the occasion passes, the tension of the heart relaxes, temptations crowd and hurry back: and the slips of conscience recommence, and confusion triumphs again, though the paper plans of duty are symmetrical as ever; looking now with vain remonstrance at our rebellion, till discarded and trodden under foot for reminding us of our departed allegiance.

It is far from my desire to speak lightly of the importance of institutional and political change. But perhaps, at the present day, the true light in which to regard it is, that its function is to check evil rather than create positive good; to prevent, by timely removal, an injurious variance between the mind of a people and its ways; and leave room for the unembarrassed operations of all active causes of improvement that may spread from the centres of private life. More than this is usually expected; the intensity of political passion exaggerates the magnitude of the stake: and hence, measures, or the defeat of measures, of social innovation, usually disappoint by the smallness of the

result; while the conceptions and acts of single minds, piercing the deeps of human sympathy, and touching the springs of the human will, often start from secrecy and neglect to a power transcendent and sublime. While the vastest and best-executed schemes of subversion and reconstruction are necessarily transient, the creation of deep individual faith is the mightiest and most permanent of human powers.

For an example we need only turn to the grandest or revolutions, the travels and triumphs of Christianity itself. We do injustice to the gospel, and gratuitously lessen the wonder of its spread, when we speak of it as a *system*, deliberately projecting the downfall of the existing order of things, and urged on mainly by the physical power or intellectual persuasion of miracle. No comprehensive scheme of policy, no continuous plan, no study of effect however benevolent, can be traced in our Lord's ministry. These ingenuities are the necessary resort of our feeble minds, which have to adapt themselves with nicety to foreign causes, to conciliate events instead of commanding them, to accumulate power by making each step contribute something to the next. But where there is an exuberance of strength, and every moment is in itself equal to the demand made upon it, the soul may retain its divine freedom, unchained by the successive links of preconceived arrangement. Art and strategy constitute the wisdom of those whose ends must be gained *against* the wills of others; but are misplaced in those who act *upon* and *by* their loving and consenting mind. There is a wisdom of the understanding, arising from *foresight*, which demands policy; there is a higher wisdom of the soul, derived from *insight*, which dispenses with it. To discern 'that which is before and

after,' has been pronounced the great *human* prerogative: but to see clearly that which is *within*, is the *divine*. And this was Christ's; the source of that majestic power by which, as the hierophant and interpreter of the god-like in the soul, he uttered everlasting oracles. He penetrated through the film to the inner mystery and silence of our nature: and when he spake, an instant music,—as of a minster organ touched by spirits at midnight,—thrilled and made a low chant within. O, when speech is given to a soul holy and true as his, Time, and its dome of ages, becomes as a mighty whispering gallery, round which the imprisoned utterance runs and reverberates for ever! His awful vows in the wilderness, the mournful breathings of Olivet, the mellow voice that led the hymn at the Last Supper, the faint cries of Calvary, the solemn assurance that heaven and God dwell in us,—do they not ring and vibrate in our hearts unto this day? It was not chiefly the force of external miracle on the convictions, not the logical persuasion of his mere authority, not even the soundness and reasonableness of his doctrine, that gave to his religion its penetrative power; but the mind itself, of which his life and discourse were but the symbol and expression; the clearness and beauty with which he revealed that portion of the Deity that may dwell in man, and by action as well as words proved the reality of holiness, cast to the winds the doubts that hung as foul mists around all that was divine, and drew it forth from the world's background of night in colours soft as the rainbow, yet intense as the sun. Had the soul of Christ been different, in vain would all external endowments of verbal truth and physical omnipotence have been accumulated on him. It was that spirit within,—the impersonation of

heavenly love and light,—that retained around him by unconscious attraction the little band of simple men, to whom it was ‘the Father’s good pleasure to give’ this ‘kingdom’—this transcendent dominion over the human heart. It was this that imparted to them their best inspiration, and made them missionaries and martyrs; that followed them like an unearthly vision through life, in persecution and peril giving them ‘that very hour what they ought to say;’ in temptation and conflict coming as ‘an angel to strengthen’ them; in prison and in bonds enabling them to say, ‘but none of these things move us.’ Here was one of God’s great powers abroad among men, which it was impossible should die. True, the world’s heart seemed old and withered: the more perhaps would the new element spread, like a fire bursting in the heart of a forest dry and dead. Soon, in the dark and unvisited recesses of many an ancient city, there lurked a living point of faith; perceptible at first only in the altered countenance of the Jew, whose lip no longer curled in scorn, and whose pride was turned to mercy; or in the opened brow of the slave, from whom abjectness seemed chased away; or in the murmurs of happy prayer, that strayed from some wretched cabin into the street, mingling there with the traffic, the revelry, the curse. This was the faith which was to tread the earth with royalty so great; precisely, be it observed, because it thus began its march, conquering each individual heart that came nearest to its reach, and leaving there a garrison of truth and love, before passing on to newer victories. Thus before the holiness of Christ, which was and is the supreme energy of the gospel, the craft of hierarchies, and the force of governments, and the inertia of a massive civilization, gave way. And while thousands



of state-projects on the vastest scale have been conceived, executed, and forgotten; while on the field of history the repeated tramp of armies has been heard to approach, to pass by, to die away; while the noise of shifting nations, and the shriek of revolutions, have gone up from earth to heaven, and left silence once more behind,—this meek power triumphs over all; speaking with a persuasion which no vicissitudes of language can render obsolete, and throughout the ever-varying abodes of humanity singing its sweet songs to our heavy hearts.

The revival of Christianity from its corruptions illustrates the same truth; that the greatest social changes begin in the creation of individual faith. I am aware that both the origin and the reformation of our religion are sometimes appealed to by sceptical and subversive minds, as justifying contentment with *their* method of procedure, which consists only in destroying something falsely esteemed venerable. No doubt, on a first view, both these revolutions seem to have overturned a great deal. But on nearer inspection this character will be found to have belonged to them as a mere accident, not as their essence; as a symptom of something deeper, not as their ultimate spirit. Neither of them was a merely negative and disorganizing agency, simply annihilating a sacred system of ideas: but each, on the contrary, was a positive and creative power, putting into the mind, not doubts, but faith; not emptying and closing up the shrine of the secret heart, but consecrating and opening it afresh for worship. As new faiths however demand new forms, and a living religion cannot find a fitting church in the dead body of an old one, temples, rites, and priests, that once had greatness, ceased to be, replaced by other

and sincerer ones. Thus, it is true, these revolutions overwhelmed ancient institutions, but only by creating new ideas: their internal spirit was organic; their external effect only, subversive. The Reformation can never be properly understood, so long as it is looked at either in the light of a change of doctrines, or a publication of the right of the intellect to free inquiry. It was, essentially, a substitution of individual faith for sacerdotal reliance, of personal religion for ecclesiastical obedience. The same spirit, in a less healthy form, reappeared, to reproduce the same phenomena, when Methodism arose, and diffused itself with gradual but triumphant power from the earnest souls of the Wesleys. In all these instances, the regenerative influence commences its action with the great mass of the people: for it is an apparent law of Providence, that while in society *knowledge descends, faiths ascend*: while science, doubt, opinion, all ideas of the understanding, gravitate from the few to the many; affections, convictions, truths of the conscience and the heart, rise from the many to the few.

Those who are unused to this mode of conceiving of human improvement, as spreading from secret centres to a wide circumference, and who are accustomed to the notion of civilization by external agencies, may perhaps adduce the printing-press as an instance of a vast engine of amelioration, mechanical rather than moral. It is obvious however that the press, with all its magic, is not a power in itself, but a mere instrument;—a *tool*, whose influence, in kind and degree, depends altogether on the spiritual forces that wield it; which might be given to the savage, without producing the smallest fruits of culture; and to a community of the vicious, without producing any culture that is good.



It is simply an implement for the transmission of mental action; and it is the thought, not the machinery, that works the wonders of which we boast. Its function is, to bring into contact such minds as there are; and, as in private intercourse, it depends on the character of those minds, whether is circulated the vitality of health, or the contagion of disease. It is true indeed that, in the long run, the highest spirits are always the strongest too: but this is a law of nature, which human inventions did not make and cannot alter: and the press, giving equal voice to all, leaves the proportionate influence of different orders of minds precisely where it was; widening the empire, but not re-disposing of the victory. And after all, it cannot serve as an equivalent to the living individual action of soul on soul. Who will compare a printed Testament with the voice and presence of an Apostle? The words may be the same, and what is called the meaning may be apprehended: but see how listlessly the poor labourer in his cottage turns over the dead page, missing the comment of imploring gesture, and kindling eye, and earnest tones, which doubtless pierced and fired the audience of Paul!

To individual faithfulness then, to the energy of the private conscience, has God committed the real history and progress of mankind. In the scenes wherein we daily move, from capacities common to us all, do drop the seeds from which, if ever, the Paradise of God must grow and blossom upon the earth. He that can be true to his best and secret nature, that can, by faith and patience, conquer the struggling world within, is most likely to send forth a blessed power to vanquish the world without. Mysteries of influence fall from every earnest volition, to return to us, in gladness or

in weeping, after many days. No insult can we pass upon the divine but gentle dignity of duty, no quenching of God's spirit can we allow, that will not prepare a curse for others as well as for ourselves: nor any reverence, prompt and due, in act as in thought, can we pay to the God within, that will not yield abundant blessing. 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.'

XI.

THE CONTENTMENT OF SORROW.

ISAIAH LIII. 10.

YET IT PLEASED THE LORD TO BRUISE HIM ; HE HATH PUT HIM TO GRIEF.

FROM age to age mankind have importunately sought for the reasons of sorrow ; and from age to age have returned from the quest unsatisfied ; for still is the question constantly renewed. How could it be otherwise ? As sickness entered house after house, and waste made havoc on generation after generation, it was inevitable that our terrified hearts, ever clinging to that which must be wrenched away, and warmed by that which must be stricken by the frosts of death in our embrace, should cry, ' O why these cruel messages of separation, these decrees of exile thrown amid groups of friends and kindred ? ' But the angel of destruction makes no reply : silently he executes his mission : only he relents not ; and whether he be met by tears and prayers, or by frowns and the deplorable affectation of defiance, he does his sacred bidding, and passes on. It would seem that our passionate curiosity, which continues to urge its '*why* ? ' is never to be satisfied ; but still to hand down its question as the eternal and unanswered cry of the human race. And

however impatient some minds may feel at our helpless struggles with this difficulty, the thoughtful will acquiesce in them tranquilly. For they know that it is of such unsolved problems, of such mental strife with the mysterious, which uses up our knowledge, and lets us fall upon our conscious ignorance, that religion has its birth; and that the perpetual renewal of this great controversy maintains the soul in that intermediate position between the known and the incomprehensible, the finite and the infinite, which excludes as well the dogmatism of certainty as the apathy of nescience and chance, and calls up that wonder, reverence, and trust, which are the fitting attributes of our nature. There is a sense in which the maxim has a profound truth, that 'ignorance is the mother of devotion;'—a sense however by no means justifying the continuance of any ignorance which can be removed, or can degrade one human being below another; but tending to reconcile us to such as may be rendered inevitable by the limits assigned to our faculties. If men knew everything, they would venerate nothing: reverence is not the affection with which objects of knowledge, as such, are regarded; and to place any object of thought under the eye of religious contemplation, it must be stationed above the region of distinct perception, in the shadows of that Infinitude which sleeps so awfully around the luminous boundaries of our knowledge. In this position is the great question respecting the amount of evil in human life; near the highest summit of our knowledge, and the deepest root of our religion.

To the demand of the human heart for less suffering and a more liberal dispensation of happiness, no answer, *as from God*, can be discovered in scripture or in philosophy; and all attempts to assign *his* reasons

for the present adjustments of the world in this respect, have, I believe, signally failed. But it is otherwise when we attempt an answer, *as from ourselves*; when, instead of taking for granted that the demand is just, and waiting till it obtains its reply from without, we look into the demand itself, and ask whether it is wise and right; whether it comes from a condition of the understanding and the heart desirable and excellent, or disordered and ignoble. Paradox as it may seem, it is, I conceive, still true, that the state of mind which urges the question is necessarily incapable of understanding the answer.

At the foundation of all our difficulties and questionings respecting the evils of our lot, is a secretly-cherished notion, that we have a *right* to a more advantageous condition. We imagine ourselves in some way ill-treated, and think we might fairly have expected a happier life. We speak as beings who had formed anticipations more sanguine than have been realized. The feeling that asks for more happiness has evidently a private standard of its own, by which it tries the sufficiency of its own enjoyment;—an ideal measure which it applies in its judgment of the actual Providence of God; and this is the rule by which alone the estimate of that Providence is made. Now what is the origin of this criterion to which we submit the decision of the solemn question respecting the character of God? How do we make up our conceptions of the amount of happiness which we may fittingly expect? There is but one school in which all our expectations are trained, viz. experience; but one source of belief respecting the future, viz. knowledge of the past; that which actually *has been*, dictates all our ideas of what possibly *may be*. That image then

of adequately happy life which we complain of not realizing, that picture which would perfect our content, is a repetition of what we have felt, a miniature of our habitual consciousness, painted in the colours of positive experience. Our present ideal is God's past reality; nor could we ever have framed even the notion of such enjoyment, had not our own lot been one of peace: by blessing us, he gives us the power to entertain hard thoughts of him; and we take occasion, from his claims upon our gratitude, to judge harshly of his government. Had he made us miserable (as we now count misery), inured us to severities so constant as even to shut out the conception of anything better, we should have been ready with a song of thanksgiving for the mercies of a lot now raising only murmurs. Impious perversity, that thus renders to God evil for good, and, in answer to blessing, mutters forth a curse!

That the tacit claim which we make upon Providence has really its origin in a happy experience, is confirmed by a fact often noticed, that habitual sufferers are precisely those who least frequently doubt the Divine benevolence, and whose faith and love rise to the serenest cheerfulness. Possessed by no idea of a prescriptive title to be happy, their blessings are not benumbed by anticipation, but come to them fresh and brilliant as the first day's morning and evening light to the dwellers in Paradise. Instead of the dulness of custom, they have the power of miracle. With the happy, it is their constant peace that seems to come by nature, and to be blunted by its commonness,—and their griefs to come from God, sharpened by their sacred origin: with the sufferer, it is his pain that appears to be a thing of course, and to require no

explanation, while his relief is reverently welcomed as a divine interposition, and, as a breath of Heaven, caresses the heart into melodies of praise. When the great Father, in his everlasting watch, paces his daily and nightly rounds, and through these lower mansions of his house gathers in the offered desires of his children, *where*, think you, does he hear the tones of deepest love, and see on the uplifted face the light of most heartfelt gratitude? Not where his gifts are most profuse, but where they seem most meagre; not where the suppliant's worship glides forth from the cushion of luxury, through lips satiated with plenty, and rounded by health; not within the halls of successful ambition, or even the dwellings of unbroken domestic peace; but where the outcast, flying from persecution, kneels in the evening upon the rock whereon he sleeps; at the fresh grave, where, as the earth is opened, Heaven in answer opens too; by the pillow of the wasted sufferer, where the sunken eye, denied sleep, converses with a silent star, and the hollow voice enumerates in low prayer the scanty list of comforts, and shortened tale of hopes. Genial, almost to miracle, is the soil of sorrow; wherein the smallest seed of love, timely falling, becometh a tree, in whose foliage the birds of blessed song lodge and sing unceasingly. And the doubts of God's goodness, whence are they? Rarely from the weary and overburdened, from those broken in the practical service of grief and toil; but from theoretic students at ease in their closets of meditation, treated themselves most gently by that legislation of the universe which they criticise with a melancholy so profound.

There are indeed those who discern nothing sanctifying in sorrow; who say that they are best when they

are happiest,—of prompter conscience, of nobler faith, of more earnest aspirations; who seem sunk in apathy or stung into irritability by affliction; and who pass through it, finding therein no waters of life, but only a scorched desert,—where the earth is as sand beneath, and the heavens as molten fire above. Those whose sympathies thus dry up and wither in grief, as if a hot wind had swept over them, are infected with the fever of self. In the inner and subterranean chamber of their nature are no cool springs of affection, collected from the treasured dews of heaven, but nether fires, glowing outwards to meet the heats that strike inwards from the skies. They are given over to the insatiable idea of mere happiness, in one form or other; and, this ungratified, find refreshment in nothing more divine. Failing in the passive half of life, they pride themselves on the energy with which, in cheerful days, they execute their active duties. But it is clear that these are not executed *as duties*,—as due, that is, to the high and holy law by which God rules us with pure affection. They have no deep root of love, but grow from some shallower sentiment,—the sense of propriety, the respect of opinion, the taste for order, the suggestions of ambition: for were there the true affectionate heart of reverence, how could it thus stipulate in favour of its own self-will;—how litigate with God for ampler wages;—how refuse his willing service, unless the post of command and action be given, and grow sullen to be appointed but a door-keeper at the gate of his tent of dwelling, on the outside of its light and joy? Certain it is that no one possessed by this temper can be the true disciple of the man of sorrows, or look with the eye of Christ on nature and life. No holy spirit *fills and consecrates* their scenes; no silken cords of

divine love weave together the whole tissue, dark or gay, of human existence, and make it all as a garment of God, more sacred than prophet's mantle. What difference did it make to Christ, whether in the wilderness he did fierce battle with temptation; or sat on the green slope to teach the people, and send them home as if God had dropped upon their hearts amid the shades of evening: whether he stood over the corpse, and looking on the dark eyes, said, 'Let there be light,' and the curtain of the shadow of death drew up; or saw the angel of duty approach himself in the dress of the grave, and on the mournful whisper 'Come away' tendered his hand and was meekly led: whether his walk was over strewn flowers, or beneath the cross too heavy to be borne;—amid the cries of 'Hosanna,' or the murderous shout? The difference was all of pain;—none was there of conscience, of trust, of power, of love. Let there be a conscious affiliation with God; and as he pervadeth all things, a unity is imparted to life, and a stability to the mind, which put not happiness indeed, but character and will, above the reach of circumstance: a current of pure and strong affections, fed by the fount of bliss, pours from hidden and sunlit heights, and winds through the open plains and dark ravines of life, till its murmurs fall into the everlasting deep.

Thus far our complaints against the evils of our lot would appear to indicate a wrong state of mind towards God. The disappointment in which they originate is the result of happy experience; and had we never been blessed, we could never be querulous. In the natural place of affectionate retrospect, we suffer the intrusion of murmurs; and our quarrel with the present is a hostile substitute for gratitude towards the past. When

the custom of God's mercies thus tempts us to forget that they are gratuities, and hardens us to make bold claims of prescriptive right; when we begin to reckon among his gifts only the extraordinary and unexpected benefits of our lot, and, measuring his goodness by the mere overflowings of the cup, become angry when happiness does not rise to the brim,—it is time for our pampered minds to learn, by discipline of grief, a less wayward temper: the canker of too long a comfort is eating out the whole religion of our hearts. We are dressing up our life, as if it were the eternal palace of a god, instead of the brief halt and hospice of the pilgrim: and there were mercy in the stroke that should lay it in ruins, and send our unsheltered head into the storm, to seek our rest in a meeker and more suppliant spirit. It is no mere superstition that leads us sometimes to say, of a prosperity and outward peace, that it is 'too great to last;' not indeed that any blessing is too great for God to give, but only too great for us to receive. Freely might he continue it, but innocently we should scarce enjoy it, in perpetuity; and it is the intuitive perception of this, the secret consciousness that the upward gush of gratitude is growing feebler,—that the incrustations of ease are creeping over the wells of spiritual life,—that causes us, amid our comforts, to tremble as in a day of wrath, and occasionally sheds over the brilliant colours of enjoyment a slight and mysterious tinge as from the shadow of guilt. 'Tis awful and prophetic as the handwriting on the wall; becoming a splendour, as of the heavens, to those who revere it, and a blackness, as of doom, to those that neglect it. Blessed are they that, turning an eye within, can discern and interpret it betimes!

And if our complaints of trial and suffering result

from a wrong state of mind in relation to God, they no less imply mistake in relation to ourselves and erroneous ideas of our own welfare. At least our griefs of bereavement (which are the severest of all), our expostulations with death, treat as utterly gone, treasures whose best portion is with us still; even proved to be present by the very tears that weep their absence. For wherein consists the value of parent, child, or friend? Is it in the use we may make of him, or in the love we feel for him? Is it in his form, his voice, his features,—or in the dear memories and delightful affections which these awaken in our minds? As a foreign land differs from our own, not in its soil, but in its recollections; as another house differs from our own, not by its materials, but by the spirit of its associated feelings, not as a substance, but as a sign,—so does a friend differ from a stranger, not in his person, but in his power over our hearts. He is nothing to us, but for the impression he leaves upon our souls, to present which is the mission whereto God has sent him, and the office for which we love him. Of all the ingredients that enter into that infinitely complex thing, a human life, of all the influences that radiate from it, and proclaim it *there*, none surely are so essential as the affections it kindles in others; and if beings around entertain of it a blessed and noble conception, are filled by it with generous aspirations, and feel the thought of it to be as a fire from heaven, *in this* is its true and best existence; in this consists its real identity, distinguishing it by strongest marks from other minds. And all this does death leave behind; as our indestructible possession: from our mere eyes he takes the visible form of the objects of our love; for this is only borrowed: from our souls he cannot take the love itself to which

that is subservient; for it is given us for ever. The very grief that wastes us testifies that, in his true worth, the companion we lament as lost is with us still; for is it not the idea of him that weeps in us, his image that supplies the tears? His best offices he will continue to us yet, if we are true to him; with serenest look, as through the windows of the soul, rebuking our disquiet, bracing our faith, quickening our conscience, and cooling the fever-heats of life. Doubtless the thought of him is transmuted from gladness into sorrow. But will any true heart say that an affection is an evil because it is sad, and wish to shake it off, the moment it brings pain? Call it what you will, *that* is not love which itself is anxious to grow cold: the emotions of a faithful soul never entertain a suicidal purpose, and plan their own extinction: rather do they reproach their own insensibility, and passionately pray for a greater vitality. Whether then in anxiety or in peace, in joy or in regrets, let the spirit of affection stay; and if the spirit stay, the objects, though vanished, leave their best presence with us still. No; that only is truly lost which we have ceased to love: if there be a friend whom in our childhood or our youth we venerated for the wisdom of virtue and beauty of holiness, and whom now we regard with the aversion of corrupted tastes, or the coldness of callous hearts, *he* indeed is lost: if there be a companion whose hand was once locked in ours with the vows, seemingly so firm, of our enthusiastic years, and on whom now we look with a mind frozen by the worldliness or poisoned by the jealousies and rivalries of life, such a one is surely lost: but not the departed who left our world with benediction, and fell close-locked in our embrace: such a one, though dead, yet speaketh; the others, though

living, are silent to our hearts. Of the alienated the loss is absolute, an extinction of a part of our nature. But the sainted dead shall finish for us the blessed work which they began. They tarried with us, and nurtured a human love; they depart from us, and kindle a divine. Cease then, our complaining hearts, and wait in patience the great gathering of souls!

XII.

IMMORTALITY.

2 CORINTHIANS I. 9.

WE HAD THE SENTENCE OF DEATH IN OURSELVES, THAT WE SHOULD NOT TRUST IN OURSELVES, BUT IN GOD WHO RAISETH THE DEAD.

PAUL, at his nearest view of death, obtained his firmest 'trust in God who raiseth the dead.' Socrates, with the cup of poison in his hand, declares it powerless: and taking it as the pledge of temporary parting from his weeping friends, goes cheerfully forward to explore the future. We, who are in no such extremity, but at ease and in command of the strong posts of life, are seduced into sceptic misgivings of its perpetuity, and are conscious of at least transient doubts, whether soul and body do not go out together. And so indeed it ever is. Amid the so-called goods of existence, we most shudder at the view of its privations; while from active contact with its griefs, its grandeur appears least doubtful, and, in the bold struggle with ills, they prove a phantom and slip away. From the sunlit heights of life, the deep vales and hollows of its necessities look darkest: but to the faithful whose path lies there, there is still light enough to show the way, and to no other eyes do the everlasting hills and blue heavens seem so brilliant. Our nobler faith is not dashed, as we sup-

pose, by the severities, but rather enervated by the indulgences, of experience: it is on the bed of luxury, not on the rock of nature, that scepticism has its birth. Paul, the hardly-entreated apostle, the homeless and ever-perilled missionary,—his back scarred with stripes, his hands heavy with bonds, the outcast of Jewish hate and Pagan scorn,—writes as he flies, to ask the voluptuous Corinthians, ‘How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?’ and to prove in words that immortality of which his life was the demonstration in action. And while from the centre of comforts many a sad fear goes forth, and the warmest lot becomes often filled with the chilliest doubts, hidden within it like a heart of ice that cannot melt, you may find toiling misery that trusts the more, the more it is stricken, and amid the secret prayers of mourners hear the sweetest tones of hope.

This paradox is far from being inexplicable. All true religion is a sense of want; and where wants go to sleep upon possession, it becomes bewildered, and when occasionally opening its eyes, sees nothing with the clearness of reality. Religion implies a perception of the infinite and invisible; and where the finite is illuminated too strongly, nothing else can be discerned, and all beyond appears, not dim twilight shadow, but blank darkness. The full-orbed brilliancy of life brings out the colours of the earth, and makes it seem as vast and solid as if there were nothing else: in the midnight watch, it is felt only at the point beneath our feet, and the sphere of stars in which it swims alone is seen. Indeed the suspicion that this life is our all, appears to be simply an example, upon a large scale, of a delusion and disproportion of idea which we are continually experiencing in detail, and without which perhaps our

discerning and our practical energies would be ill-harmonized. I allude to that exaggeration of the present moment, that concentration of anxiety and effort on the present object, which makes the point of pending action everything, and for a time kills the reality of all beside. Desire, else broken by dispersion, singles out project after project in succession, on which to gather all its intensity: each in turn becomes the vivid and sole point of life: as the eye applied to the microscope may see the centre of the field without notice of the margin of the very object beneath its view. This optical exclusiveness of mind, this successive insulation of effort, is the needful condition on which the will performs its work with gladness: for who would not sink and faint upon the dust, if the whole task of existence were spread before him at once? Let us then in *practice*, as the *labourers* of God, bless him for our blindness; but in *meditation*, as the *believers* of God and explorers of his Providence, not on that account deny that there is light. Our delusion, operating in detail, is corrected by experience, which shifts us ever to a new point of view: and how often do we smile in retrospect at the passionate self-precipitation, the silent tension or stormy force of desire, with which we bent towards some aim, that seemed for the instant the very goal of life: the eagle-eyed precision with which we fell, as on a prey, upon some thing that now seems one of the most trivial creatures that stirs the grass! Our eyes once opened thus, we say that it 'was a dream.' And most truly: for those who are awake always discover that they *have been dreaming*; but those who dream never suspect that they *shall wake*. For the time, the images of sleep are the intensest of realities; they are the sleeper's universe; they agitate him with hope and terror, with

love and grief, with admiration and transport, as genuine as human heart can feel ; while they continue to flit around him, they shut in and limit his belief, and totally exclude the conceptions suitable to the world on which he lies. And so is it with the long trance of human life ; we are ever dreaming to the present, and waking to the past ; clearly estimating each illusion when it is gone, but too vividly occupied with new ones to expect any morning summons to a correcting world beyond. Not till we are startled by that call, and stand outside our existing sphere of thought, can we discover how much of phantasm there is in life as a whole ; but the wise will assuredly distrust their feeling of its exclusive reality ; will know that if it were a mere scenic image, a painted vacancy, environed by immense and solemn realities, this same feeling would have been no less strong ; and they will rouse themselves so far as at least to ' dream that they dream.'

The feeling of impossibility which, I believe, haunts many persons in adverting to the immortality of the soul, the vague apprehension of some insuperable obstacle to the realization of anything so great, appears to arise from mere indolence of conception ; and vanishes in proportion as the affections are deeply moved, and the intuitions of reason are trusted rather than the importunities of sense. There is certainly nothing in our idea of the mind, as there is in that of organization, contradictory of the belief of its perpetuity ;—nothing which involves the notion of dissolution, or of limited duration. All the properties of the thinking principle, remembrance, imagination, love, conscience, volition, are irrespective of time ; are characterized by nothing seasonal ; are incapable of disease, fracture, or decay. They have nothing in their

nature to prescribe their existence for an hour, a century, a thousand years, or in any way to bring them to termination. Were it the will of the Creator to change his arrangements for mankind, and to determine that they should henceforth live in this world ten or a hundred times as long as they do at present, no one would feel that *new souls* would be required for the execution of the design. And in the mere conception of unlimited existence there is nothing more amazing than in that of unlimited non-existence; there is no more mystery in the mind living for ever in the future, than in its having been kept out of life through an eternity in the past. The former is a negative, the latter a positive infinitude. And the real, the authentic wonder, is the actual *fact* of the transition having been made from the one to the other; and it is far more incredible that from not having been, *we are*, than that from actual being, we shall *continue to be*.

And if there be no speculative impossibility in the immortality of the soul, it cannot be rendered inconceivable by any physical considerations connected with death. We are apt, indeed, to be misled by the appearances of the last hour; appearances so appalling, so humbling, so associated with the memories of happy affection and the approach of bleakest solitude, that it would be surprising if we did not interpret them amiss, and see them falsely through our tears. As we turn away from that last agony, we are tempted to say in our despair,—there, there, is the visible return of all to darkness; the proof that all is gone; the fall of the lamp into the death-stream. Yet it is clear that neither the phenomena of death, nor any other sensible impression, can afford the least substantive evidence that the mind has ceased to be. Non-existence is a

negation, which neither sight can see, nor ear can hear: and the fading eye, the motionless lips, the chill hand, establish nothing, and simply give us *no report*: refusing us the familiar expression of the soul within, they leave the great question open, to be determined by any positive probabilities which may be sought in other directions. In life, we never saw or heard the principle of thought and will and love, but only its corporeal effects in lineament and speech. If the bare absence of these signs were sufficient to prove the extinction of the spirit which they obey, the spectacle of sleep would justify us in pronouncing the mind dead; and if neither slumber nor silence have been found to afford reason for the denial of simultaneous thought, death affords no better ground for the dreary inference. It is to no purpose to say, that we have not experience of the separability of consciousness from bodily life; for originally there was no experience of the separability of consciousness from bodily waking; and with the same reason which would lead us to mourn the extinction of a friend's spirit in death, might Adam have bewailed the annihilation of Eve in the first sleep of Eden. Nay, if we are not to conceive of the existence of a friend, where there is no physical manifestation, it will follow that till there was a visible creation, there was no Infinite Spirit: and that if ever the Creator shall cast aside the mantle of his works, if the order, the beauty, the magnificence, of the universe, through which he appears to us and hides his essence behind the symbol of his infinitude, are ever to have their period and vanish, if ancient prediction shall be fulfilled, and 'the heavens pass away with a noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat,' that hour will be, by the same rule which declares human

annihilation, not only the end of all things, but the death of God.

Indeed there is that in the very nature of the immaterial mind, which appears to me to exempt it from the operation of all material evidence of its destruction. It is impossible to form a steady conception of *thought*, except as originating *behind* even the innermost bodily structures, and intrinsically different from them. However much you refine and attenuate the living organism, yet, after all, thought is something quite unlike the whitest and the thinnest tissue ; and the most delicate of fibres, woven if you please in fairy loom, can never be spun into emotions. Nor is it at all easier to imagine ideas and feelings to be the *results* of organization, and to constitute one of the physical *relations* of atoms ; and if any one affirms that the juxtaposition of a number of particles makes a hope, and that an aggregation of curious textures forms veneration, he affirms a proposition to which I can attach no idea. Agitate and affect these structures as you will, pass them through every imaginable change, let them vibrate and glow, and take a thousand hues ; still you can get nothing but motion, and temperature, and colour ; fit marks and curious signals of thought behind themselves, but no more to be confounded with it, than are written characters to be mistaken for the genius and knowledge which may record themselves in language. The corporeal frame then is but the mechanism for making thoughts and affections *apparent*, the signal-house with which God has covered us, the electric telegraph by which quickest intimation flies abroad of the spiritual force within us. The instrument may be broken, the dial-plate effaced : and though the hidden artist can make no more signs, he



may be rich as ever in the things to be signified. Fever may fire the pulses of the body : but wisdom and sanctity cannot sicken, be inflamed and die. Neither consumption can waste, nor fracture mutilate, nor gunpowder scatter away, thought, and fidelity, and love, but only that organization which the spirit sequestered therein renders so fair and noble. To suppose such a thing would be to invert the order of rank which God has visibly established among the forces of our world, and to give a downright ascendancy to the brute energies of matter above the vitality of the mind, which, up to that point, discovers, subdues and rules them ; to proclaim the triumph of the sword, the casualty, the pestilence, over virtue, truth and faith ; to set the cross above the crucified ; to surrender the holy things of this world to corruption, and shroud its heaven with darkness, and turn its moon into blood. Think only of this earth as it floats beneath the eye of God,—a speck in the blue infinite,—a precious life-balloon freighted with the family of spirits he has willed to come up and travel in this portion of his universe. Remember that at this very moment, and at each tick of the clock, some fifty souls have departed hence, gone with their tempestuous passions, their strife, their truth, their hopes, into space and silence : not either with the appearance of forces spent and finished ; for there are children fallen away, with expectant look on life, nothing doubting the secure embrace that seemed to fold them round ; there is youth, raised up to self-subsistence, not without difficulty and sorrow, with the clear deep light of thought and wonder shining from within, quenched in sudden night ; there is many an heroic life, built on no delusion of sense and selfishness, but firm on the adamant of faith, and defying the

seductions of falsehood and the threats of fear,—sunk from us absolutely away, and giving no answer to our recalling entreaties and our tears. And will you tell me that all this treasure, which is nothing less than infinite, is *cancelled* and puffed away, like a worthless bubble, into emptiness? Does God stand ahead of this mighty car of being, as it traverses the skies, only to throw out the boundless wealth of lives it bears, and hurl them headlong into the abyss midway on their voyage through eternity? Put the question in conjunction with any overwhelming calamity, which perceptibly plunges into sudden silence a multitude of souls; like the dreadful destruction just announced from the Western world, of a ship* freighted with priceless lives, with the wealth of homes, the hopes of the oppressed, the lights of nations. Let any one think over the contents of that fated ship, when it quitted the port at even, amid the cheerful parting of friends, and consider well *where they were* when the morning broke. There were travellers from foreign lands, ready with pleased heart to tell at home the thousand marvels they had gathered on their way. There was a family of mourners, taking to their household graves their unburied dead. And there was *one* at least of rare truth and wisdom, of design than which philanthropy knows nothing greater; of faith that all must venerate, and love that all must trust; of persuasive lips, from which a thoughtful genius and the simplest heart poured forth the true music of humanity. And does any one believe that this freight of transcendent worth,

* The steamboat *Lexington*, which left New York for Boston, 13th January, 1840, and was burned that night in Long Island Sound, with the loss of all on board except four. Dr. Fulton was among the number that perished. The present discourse was suggested by that event.

—all this sorrow, and thought, and hope, and moral greatness, and pure affection, were *burnt*, and went out with flame and cotton-smoke? Sooner would I believe that the fire consumed the less everlasting stars! Such a galaxy of spiritual light and order and beauty is spread above the elements and their power, and neither heat can scorch it, nor cold water drown. The plaintive wind that swept in the morning over the black and heaving wreck would moan in the ear of sympathy with the wail of a thousand survivors; but to the ear of wisdom and of faith, would sound as the returning whisper and requiem of hope.

There appears to be a caprice in the dispensation of death, quite at variance with the scrupulous regularity and economy of nature in less momentous affairs; and strongly indicative of a hidden sequel. The inferior departments of creation are marked by a frugality and seasonal order, that seems to gather up the very fragments of good, that nothing be lost. Scarcely does a moment elapse before the cast-off structure of plant or animal is put in requisition for some new purpose. Such value seems to be attached to the tree, that its seed is encased and protected with the nicest care, can retain its principle of vitality for thousands of years, and hold itself ready to germinate whenever the suitable conditions shall be presented. The wild animals have a certain term of life allotted to each species, which probably few individuals much exceed or fail to reach. Everything else seems to have its well-defined circuit and range of functions, its season of maturity and period of fall. But when we rise into the only community dignified by minds, all looks in comparison like confusion and fortuity. Infancy and age, strength and imbecility, the pure and the corrupt of heart, the full

and empty souled, drop indiscriminately away ; as if the spirits of men were the cruel sport of some high and invisible demon-game,—kindled and extinguished in remorseless and capricious jest. And if such a supposition is excluded by the harmony and exactitude which prevail in the other regions of creation, nothing is left but to believe that we see here only the partial operation of a higher law ; that we witness no extinction, but simply migrations of the mind ; which survives to fulfil its high offices elsewhere, and find perhaps in seeming death its true nativity.

Then, too, let us consider in what light we should see the character of God, if the fall of the body is really the fall of the soul ; remembering that he has put into the hearts of most men, by intuition or Providential suggestion, a divine hope of something future. Turn once more to the thought of that burning ship, and think of the memorial sounds that went up thence in the night to God. When the stars came out the first shriek ascended ; two hours past midnight the last was drowned. And in the interval did a hundred and seventy mortals shiver and cry to him from frost and flame, with faith and prayers of various and unspeakable contents,—the cold heavens looking serenely down, and gliding on as if they inclosed nothing but peace. And what was the answer of the hearer of prayer to that agony of despair ? Did he say, as no man or angel would have done, ‘ Down, begone for ever into darkness ! ’ And did he so answer, with the full knowledge of his Omniscience, that many a survivor would return this awful frown with the sweetest and most unconscious smile of resignation, hiding her mourning head with him as in the bosom of a Father ? Or, put yourselves back into the presence of an earlier and

sublimar tragedy; remember the scene on Calvary, with the words of assured hope and meek supplication that passed there from holiest lips to God. When his own Christ gave the tranquil assurance, 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,' did He who inspired that promise, and alone could fulfil, overhear it with secret rejection and denial? When the fainting utterance exclaimed with most loving meaning, 'It is finished,' did the ever-present Father put on that cry a dreadful interpretation, 'and make an end' of all things to him—that Son of God? And when he breathed forth those last words, 'Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit,' did the All-merciful refuse the trust, and reply to that pure faith, 'Take away thy cry, for mine eye shall not spare, neither will I hear with mine ear?' Did he do thus to the Galilean, knowing that, night and morning, friends and followers and disciples for ages would converse with him about this departed one, with a trustful hope which he had thus turned into a lie? Were this possible, God were no 'Father of Spirits,' to waste and mock them thus; and might no less fitly be termed the Destroyer than the Creator; and every good man might feel an infinite pity for his kind, diviner far than the very providence of heaven.

Thus, if the celestial hope be a delusion, we plainly see *who* are the mistaken. Not the mean and grovelling souls, who never reached to so great a thought; not the drowsy and easy natures, who are content with the sleep of sense through life, and the sleep of darkness ever after; not the selfish and pinched of conscience, of small thought and smaller love; no, these in such case are right, and the universe *is* on their miserable scale. The deceived are the great and holy, whom all men, aye, these very insignificants themselves, revere;

the men who have lived for something better than their happiness, and spent themselves in the race, or fallen at the altar of human good;—Paul, with his mighty and conquering courage; yes, Christ himself, who vainly sobbed his spirit to rest on his Father's imaginary love, and without result commended his soul to the Being whom he fancied himself to reveal. The self-sacrifice of Calvary was but a tragic and barren mistake; for Heaven disowns the godlike prophet of Nazareth, and takes part with those who scoffed at him and would have him die; and is insensible to the divine fitness which even men have felt, when they either recorded the supposed fact, or invented the beautiful fiction, of Christ's ascension. Whom are we to revere, and what can we believe, if the inspirations of the highest of created natures are but cunningly-devised fables?

But it is not so: and no one who has found true guidance of heart from these noblest sons of Heaven, will fear to stake his futurity, and the immortal life of his departed friends, on their vaticinations. *These*, of all things granted to our ignorance, are assuredly most like the hidden realities of God; which may be greater, but will not be less, than prophets and seers have foretold, and even our own souls, when gifted with highest and clearest vision, discern as truths not doubtful or far off. In this hope let us trust, and be true to the toils of life which it ennobles and cheers. Whoever 'fights the good fight' shall surely 'keep the faith:' for God reveals the secret of his future will to those who worthily do it in the present. This is our proper care. Putting ourselves into his hands, and living in submissive harmony with his everlasting laws, let us 'finish our course;' and leave it to him to take us, when he will, where our forerunners are, and the unfoldings of his ways are seen with open eye.

XIII.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

EPHESIANS II. 19.

FELLOW-CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS, AND OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD.

SOCIETY becomes possible only through religion. Men might be gregarious without it, but not social. Instinct, which unites them in detail, prevents their wider combination. Intellect affords light to show the elements of union, but no heat to give them crystalline form. Self-will is prevailingly a repulsive power, and often disintegrates the most solid of human masses. Even the Moral Sentiment, so far as it recognizes man as supreme, and simply tries to make a prudent adjustment of his vehement forces, can produce among a multitude only an unstable equilibrium, liable every moment to be subverted by the ever-shifting gravitation of the passions. Some sense of a Divine Presence, some consciousness of a higher Law, some pressure of a solemn Necessity, will be found to have preceded the organization of every human community, and to have gone out and perished before its death. There is great significance in the tradition which, in every people of apparently aboriginal civilization, attributes an *inspired* character to their first Lawgiver, and pronounces their

subjection to moral order a task which only the force of Heaven could achieve. They only whose voice could reach the sleeping tones of worship in the hearts of men, and awaken some deep faith and allegiance, could so deal with their wild nature, as to chain the savage passions and set free the nobler will. And although, in old societies, the innumerable fibres of government, of usage, of established ideas, supply a thousand secondary bonds, which *seem* to make the mighty growth secure as the forest oak, yet all this system of roots has, I believe, its secret nutriment from the devout elements of a nation's mind: and if these should dry up in any Arctic chill of doubt, or be poisoned by any Epicurean rot of indulgence, it would silently decay within the soil, and leave the fairest tree of history, first with a sickening foliage, and soon with a perished life. The most compact and gigantic machinery of society,—as experience shows,—falls to pieces, wherever religious and moral scepticism, by paralyzing faith and heroism and hope, has cut off the supply of spiritual power. Rome, at the commencement of our era, had reached the utmost point of material force and visible magnificence: her organization held with an iron grasp the continents of Europe and the East; her military chain spread with unbroken links from Lebanon to Gaul, and from the Caspian to the Æthiopic Nile; her wealth and arts had called into being ten thousand cities,—no mean imitations of her own greatness; her institutions had diffused a universal repose, and the functions of government were exercised with a rapidity and precision never surpassed. What brought a power thus mighty,—a power that called itself 'eternal,'—to its dissolution? Shall we be content with a figure of speech, and say that it broke



asunder from its excessive mass? Apart from spiritual decline and causes of moral disunion, I know of nothing to prevent a uniform civilization from reaching the most enormous bulk. Shall we refer rather to external dangers; and calling to mind the tempest of barbarians that 'roared around the gates of the empire,' say that it perished like a Mammoth, in a drift of Northern snows? Yet with far less imposing resources, she had stood up and lived through fiercer storms. No; the stroke was not of war, but of paralysis. The heart of religion had ceased to beat: the high faith, the stern disinterestedness, the sacred honour of the republic, had faded into tradition: the sanctities of life were disbelieved even in the nursery: no binding sentiment restrained the greediness of appetite and the licentiousness of self-will: the very passions with whose submission alone society can begin, broke loose again, —attended by a brood of artificial and parasitic vices that spread the dissolute confusion. Yet it was not that the conditions of social union had become impossible. For observe; in the midst of this corruption, in the invisible recesses of profligate cities, a small point of fresh young life is already to be discerned, like the bud of some fair growth thrusting up its head among the putrefying leaves. A few poor slaves and outcast Hebrews have heard the divinest whisper borne to them from Palestine; have discovered by it that inner region of love and hope and trust, in which all fraternity of heart begins; and are banded together with a spirit that soon speaks out and prophesies in martyrdom. While Rome displayed its greatness even in death, and struggled with the convulsions of a giant, the infant faith remained unharmed; healing as it could the wounds which the mad world suffered; and

like a fair immortal child, winning a blessed way by entrancing the souls of men with the forgotten vision of a divine simplicity and truth. Christianity has ever since been the bond of European civilization : and should its spirit ever perish hence, this glorious family of nations will be dissolved.

Let us look, with more detail, into some of the natural groups which a genuine faith can form ; and we shall find nothing incredible in its strong combining power.

Worship exhibits its uniting principle under the simplest form, in the sympathies it diffuses among the members of the same religious assembly.

It is universally felt that devotion must sometimes quit the solitude of the cell, forget its mere individual wants, and speak as from humanity's great heart to God. The scruples of the few who have objected to social piety have met with no response ; they are justly regarded as the eccentricities of a stiff and petty rationalism, that will not stir without a literal precept, and trusts any logical finger-post (possibly set the wrong way by the humour of some sophistry), rather than the cardinal guidance of those high affections which are in truth the imperishable lights of heaven. To this house we come, my friends, drawn not by arbitrary command which we fear to disobey ; not by self-interest, temporal or spiritual, which we deem it prudent to consult ; not, I trust, from dead conventionalism, that brings the body and leaves the soul ; but by a common quest of some holy spirit to penetrate and purify our life ; by a common desire to quit its hot and level dust, and from its upland slopes of contemplation inhale the serenity of God ; by the secret sadness of sin, that can delay its confessions and bear its



earthliness no more; by the deep though dim consciousness, that the passing weeks do not leave us where they find us, but plant us within nearer distance, and give us a more intimate view, of that fathomless eternity, wherein so many dear and mortal things have dropped from our imploring eyes. It is no wonder that in meditations solemn as these we love and seek each other's sympathy. It is easy, no doubt, to journey alone in the broad sunshine and on the beaten highways of our lot: but over the midnight plain, and beneath the still immensity of darkness, the traveller seeks some fellowship for his wanderings. And what is religion but the midnight hemisphere of life, whose vault is filled with the silence of God, and whose everlasting stars, if giving no clear light, yet fill the soul with dreams of immeasurable glory? It will be an awful thing to each of us to be alone, when he takes the passage from the mortal to the immortal, and is borne along,—with unknown time for expectant thought,—through the space that severs earth from heaven: and till then, at least, we will not part, but speak with the common voice of supplicating trust of that which awaits us all.

There is however no necessary fellowship, as of saints, in the mere assembling of ourselves together; but only in the true and simple spirit of worship. All these occasions of devotion assume that we have already some affections to express; that we have discernment of the divine relations of our existence; that we have souls seeking to cry out in prayer, and waiting to lie down before God in tears. The services of this place are quite mistaken by those who look on them as the means of obtaining a religion non-existent yet; who see in them only the instruments of self-discipline;

who perform here no personal act of the mind, but passively wait such operation as may befall them; or who assume, in their mental offerings, not the desires and emotions which they really experience, but those instead which they only ought to feel and hope to realize at last by persevering false profession. The lips are to follow the heart and cannot lead it: and we are here, not to make use of God for the sake of our devotion, but to pour forth devotion for the sake of God. Were every one in a Christian assembly to be all the while intent on his own improvement, to be subordinating everything to his own case, and with morbid scrupulosity to be prescribing throughout for his own temper, there would be simply no proper *worship* at all: there would be not the least union of hearts: each would sit insulated with his own separate self, and would be more naturally placed in a solitary cell, than amid an unsocial multitude: there would be none of that sublime ascent of soul, that common flight of love, in which all individuality is lost, all personal regards absorbed, and the vision of Heaven and God melts the many minds and many voices of the church in one. O how, within that Presence whose intimacy enfolds us here, can we ever stay outside the spirit of worship, and perform mere conscientious gestures of the mind, and act a part even with ourselves alone as its spectator? Will nothing short of the death-plunge into eternity steep us in its mystery, and strip off the spirit-wrappings that cover us from the communion of God? We stand *here*, as in heaven's last resort for penetrating to the earnest centre of our nature: and if the fountain of the secret life is still encased and does not flow, no common shock can break the icy crust that binds it. Think only, in simplest and briefest review,

of the considerations that pass before us at our meeting here. At this hour of prayer, when we stand within the reality of God, and face to face behold his awfulness, and tell how we are glad at all his graciousness; when we hear the sweet voice of Christ,—mellowed and deepened as it floats over eighteen centuries of meaning,—saying to us, as we bend beneath the weight of life, ‘Come unto me, ye heavy-laden;’ when we own the shameful conquests of temptation, and repent of the abandoned strife, and rebuild the fallen purpose; when there is set before us the divine dignity of existence, and the majesty of our free-will, and the high trust of duty, and the tranquil power of faith; when we speak together of our dead, and memory beholds their solemn forms so silent in the shadows of the past; when we remember how, even while we think it, some souls are surely passing away, and soon we too shall lay the burthen down and go; when, as from the brink of being, we look into futurity, and the true voice of judgment falls upon the ear, startling as the trump of conscience or healing as the symphonies of the blest; when all periods of life assemble before the Everlasting that hath no age, and the light look of the child, and the steady features of manhood, and the shaken head of age, denote their several wants and prayers; when the tempted comes to seek new strength, and the mourner sees his sorrows from a higher point, and the anxious is beguiled into a loving reliance, and the contrite weeps his sin and distrusts his tears;—at such an hour, if the disguises fall not from our hearts, and leave us a disembodied fraternity of souls sending the chorus of common want to Heaven, then indeed are we slaves to the earthly life, without that enfranchisement of spirit, that makes possible a ‘fellow-

ship of saints,' and exalts us to 'the household of God.'

Where however a pure devotion really exists, the fellowship it produces spreads far beyond the separate circle of each Christian assembly. A single company of pious men, gathered together from among a race that could not worship, would indeed draw close their mutual sympathies at the expense of alienation from their kind. But it is not so. We are brought to stand side by side within this place by no exclusive propensity, no whimsical peculiarity of the few: the impulse is of nature, not of fancy; and we know this at the moment we obey it. We meet, with the remembrance that we are in the midst of brethren who meet too: and every religious society, though physically shut in by its sanctuary walls, kneels in secret consciousness of the presence of kindred fraternities without number, subdued by the same sanctities, and pressing to the same end, not by human agreement, but a divine consent. As every individual in a place of prayer, overhearing the like spontaneous tones from many souls around him, cannot but deepen the fervour of his own; so each assembly, feeling that its neighbourhood is studded over with similar groups prostrate in adoration like itself, sends to Heaven a more genial and humaner cry; and every neighbourhood, mustering to prayer, thinks of the busy peals from clustered churches that cross and crowd one another in each distant town, or the single quiet chime in every village of the land, and finds in the thought a gladder and a kindlier praise; and every land, aware that it is but one of a company of nations, federally bound of God by irrepressible aspirings to himself, chants its mighty note with deeper meaning, as part of a universal

symphony heard in its unity in Heaven alone. Surely it is a glorious thing to call up, while we worship here, the wide image of Christendom this day. Turn your thoughts away from the noisy discord of sects ; believe nothing of their mutual slanders ; forgive the occasional weakness of superstition ; and be not angry with the narrow vision of earnest conviction that can see nothing but its own truth : and far beneath the superficial divisions created by the intellect, see in the Sabbath spectacle of the world, evidence of a deep and wide-spread union of hearts. Could we be lifted up above this sphere, and look down as it rolls beneath this day's sun, and catch its murmurs as they rise, should we not behold land after land turned into a Christian shrine ? The dawn, that summons mortals from their sleep, bears them to-day a new and sacred message ; the sun-beam touches the gates of ten thousand temples, and they burst open to receive the record of countless aspirations ; the morning shoots across the desert atmosphere of a weary world, strikes on the stony form of giant humanity, and brings out tones of celestial music. In how many tongues, by what various voices, with what measureless intensity of love, is the name of Christ breathed forth to-day ! What cries of penitence, what accents of trust, what complaints of earnest desire, pass away to God ! What an awful array of faces that gaze forth into immortality with various looks of terror or of love ! The vows and prayers whose millions crowd the gates of mercy no recording Angel could tell, but only the infinite memory of God. Of how glorious a church, then, are we members when we kneel within this place ! in how solemn an act do we take our part ! with how sublime a brotherhood do we own our fellowship !

But our worship here brings us into yet nobler connexions. It unites us by a chain of closest sympathy with past generations. In our helps to faith and devotion in this place, we avail ourselves of the thought and piety of many extinct ages. We reverently read those ancient scriptures, which have gathered around them the trust, and procured the heart-felt repose, of so many tribes and periods, since prophets and apostles first gave them forth. We sing the hymns which a goodly company of pious men have left as the record of their communion with Heaven. And it is impossible to look at the consecrated names of those 'sweet singers' of Christendom, without feeling ennobled by their communion, and even astonished at our sympathy with them. Do not we, the living, take up, in adoration and prayer, the thoughts of the dead, and feel them divinely true? Do they not come forth, as if fresh coined from our own hearts? Indeed, could we ourselves so faithfully utter the consciousness of our inner being, or shape so interpreting a voice for our secret life? What an impressive testimony this to the sameness of our nature through every age, and the immortal perseverance of its holier affections! The language of *their* confessions, their struggles, their desires, speaks our own: the light that gladdened them, shines now upon our hearts: and the mists they could not penetrate, brood now upon our path. There is the choice minstrel of Israel, true alike to the spirit of mourning or of joy; there are the venerable fathers of the ancient church, whose vespers, chanted centuries ago, will suit this night as well; there is the adamant yet genial Luther, telling, with the severity of an eye-witness, the awfulness of judgment; there is the noble Milton, breathing his sweet and rugged music out of darkness; there is

the afflicted Cowper, sending out the tenderest strains from his benighted spirit: with an attendant multitude of the faithful,—the confessor, the exile, the missionary,—a chorus of sublime voices, with which it is a sacred privilege to be in harmony. And these are not merely the accents of the past, but the anthem of the sainted dead,—the strains of immortals that look back upon their toils, and behold us singing their songs of sadness here, while they have already learned the melodies of everlasting joy. Blessed communion of earth with Heaven! making us truly one family, below, above; and rendering us fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the very household of God!

And soon we too shall drop the note of earthly aspiration, and join that upper anthem of diviner love. The hour cometh, when we shall cease the mournful cry with which earth must ever pray to Heaven, and grief ask pity to its tears, and the tempted call for help in the crisis of danger, and the labouring will implore a freshened strength. Exiles as yet from the spirit of unanxious joy, we catch but the echoes of that heavenly peace, and yield response but faint and low. Yet even now the free heart of the happy and triumphant shall be ours, in proportion as we are true to the condition of *faithful service*; which alone can make us one with them. The communion of saints brings to us their conflict first, their blessings afterwards; those who will not with much patience strive with the evil, can have no dear fellowship with the good; we must weep their tears, ere we can win their peace. This sorrowful condition once accepted, the sympathies of Heaven are not slow to arise within the soul: it is the tension of sacred toil, that on the touch of every breath of life brings music from the chords of love. And then the tone

that *here* sinks in the silence of death, shall *there* swell into an immortal's fuller praise. We shall leave it to others to take up the supplicating strain; shall join the emancipated brotherhood of the departed; and in our turn look down on the outstretched hands of our children, waiting our welcome and embrace. O may the Great Father, in his own fit time, unite in one the parted family of Heaven and earth!

XIV.

CHRIST'S TREATMENT OF GUILT.

LUKE V. 8.

DEPART FROM ME; FOR I AM A SINFUL MAN, O LORD!

WHEN Simeon, on the verge of life, uttered his parting hymn within the temple, he told Mary, with the infant Jesus in his arms, that, by that child, 'the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed.' Never was prophecy more true; nor ever perhaps the mission of our religion more faithfully defined. For wherever it has spread, it has operated like a new and diviner conscience to the world; imparting to the human mind a profounder insight into itself; opening to its consciousness fresh powers and better aspirations; and penetrating it with a sense of imperfection, a concern for the moral frailties of the will, characteristic of no earlier age. The spirit of religious penitence, the solemn confession of unfaithfulness, the prayer for mercy, are the growth of our nature trained in the school of Christ. The pure image of his mind, as it has passed from land to land, has taught men more of their own hearts than all the ancient aphorisms of self-knowledge; has inspired more sadness at the evil,

more noble hope for the good that is hidden there ; and has placed within reach of even the ignorant, the neglected, and the young, severer principles of self-scrutiny than philosophy had ever attained. The radiance of so great a sanctity has deepened the shades of conscious sin. The savage convert, who before knew nothing more sacred than revenge and war, is brought to Jesus, and, as he listens to that voice, feels the stain of blood growing distinct upon his soul. The voluptuary, never before disturbed from his self-indulgence, comes within the atmosphere of Christ's spirit ; and it is as if a gale of heaven fanned his fevered brow, and convinced him that he is not in health. The ambitious priest, revolving plans for using men's passions as tools of his aggrandizement, starts to find himself the disciple of one who, when the people would have made him king, fled direct to solitude and prayer. The froward child blushes to think how little there is in him of the infant meekness which Jesus praised ; and feels that, had he been there, he must have missed the benediction, or, more bitter still, have wept to know it misapplied. Nay, so deep and solemn did the sense of guilt become under the influence of Christian thoughts, that at length the overburdened heart of fervent times could endure the weight no longer : the Confessional arose, to relieve it and restore a periodic peace ; and it became the chief object of the widest sacerdotal order which the world has ever seen, to soothe the sobs, and listen to the whispered record, of human penitence. Cities too, as if conscious of their corruption, bid the silent minster rise amid their streets, where, instead of the short daily or sabbath service, unceasing, eternal orisons might be said for sin ; where the door might open to

the touch all day, and the lamp be seen beneath the vault by night, and the passer-by, caught by the low chant, might be tempted to interrupt the chase of vanity without, for the peace of prayer within. And so, in every ancient village church of Europe, there is a corner that has been moistened with the burning tears of many generations, and witness to the confessions and griefs that prove the children's conscience and affections to be such as their fathers' were: and the cathedral aisle, emblem of the mighty heart of Christendom, has for centuries been swelled with the plaint of a penitential music, shedding its sighs aloft into the spire, as if to reach and kiss the feet of God. In private dwellings, too, from the hearts of parents and of children, every morning and evening for ages past has seen many sad and lowly prayers ascend. Everywhere the Christian mind proclaims its need of mercy, and bends beneath the oppression of its guilt; and since Jesus began to 'reveal the thoughts of many hearts,' Christendom, with clasped hands, has fallen at his feet and cried, 'We are sinful men, O Lord!'

In nurturing this sentiment, in producing this solemn estimate of moral evil and quick perception of its existence, the religion of Christ does but perpetuate the influence of his personal ministry, and give prominence, on the theatre of the world, to the feature which singularly distinguished his life, viz. his *treatment of the guilty*. It is as if he dwelt among us still, and we saw him vexed and saddened by our evil passions, and travelled with him on the way, and felt his eye of gentleness and purity upon our homes, and he told us that 'we know not what spirit we are of,' and by these very words caused us to know it instantly. Nor can we obtain any juster and deeper impressions of the

the tendencies of all wrong
 and the view of moral evil which
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and in evil days. Pro-
 near him: the ambitious
 hypocrites conspired
 was ready to be their
 malignant designs directed
 arts of delusion practised
 time with the despised
 at another, with recently-
 with artifice and insincere
 system, and administered by
 in all is visible the same
 and humanity, adapting itself,
 emergency.
 his countrymen continually
 haunted his whole ministry;
 principles began to love. They
 whom he taught upon the
 evil eye peering on him and
 amid the throngs that flocked
 But they never embarrassed
 assurance, or fluttered his spirit
 On occasion of the Feast
 annual jubilee of Jerusalem's
 robbed of their branches to
 olive-ground, and make the
 hills—all was done that enmity
 his share of the national joy,
 to the wondering people, and
 from the picturesque and
 of gladder tidings and deeper

wisdom. He saw amid the crowd the officers sent to take him, the wily steps and hesitating wills with which they tracked his wanderings over the temple courts, the exchange of whispers dropping into fixed attention with which they listened to him here and there. He stepped forward, and they recoiled, as he told them, with an air of divinest quietude, that he should be there yet longer, but no hand would touch him, and then he should be sequestered in a place which their violence could not reach. And there, day after day, they saw him still gladdening attentive hearts, and felt him subduing their own, so that again and again they ceased to be his enemies and became his followers: till on the last great day, they beheld him standing aloft on the precipitous edge of Moriah's rock, watching the procession that climbed with the water-bowl from Siloam's stream below, and as it entered with its pure libation, heard him pronounce that solemn invitation, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink of living waters.' They returned, and the attestation burst from their lips, 'Never man spake like this man.'

Nor was it merely that he regarded these men as the poor menials of others' designs,—hirelings of guiltier men. For the same impersonal tranquillity appears when he is in contact with the original agents, who endeavoured to crush his cause, and actually compassed his death. Whatever the agony of Gethsemane may have been, it was no agony of resentment: the controversy of that bitter hour was with the Father whom he loved, not with enemies whom he feared. Indeed, the nearer these enemies came, the more did the serene power of his spirit rise. After those convulsive prayers which had pierced the midnight, it seemed as if angel-thoughts had stolen in to strengthen

him. At the moment when the tramp of feet was first heard upon the bridge of Kedron, and the torches, as they passed, flashed upon its rapid waters, he was prostrate in a devotion from which tears and struggles had now passed away. When, later still, the hum of approaching voices became distinct, and the lights gleamed nearer and nearer through the trees, he was bending over his waking disciples, who overheard him breathing the wish, that they could indeed sleep on through the severities of that dreadful day, and be saved from the faithless desertion, the memory of which would be ever bitter. And when at length the armed band confronts them, and he startles them by stepping forth in answer to his name; when the kiss of betrayal has been given, and the momentary affray which Peter had challenged has been stopped by his healing power: when all are moving from the place with sullen haste,—the priests, doubtless, eager to be back within the city before it can be discovered by what nocturnal exploit they, the conservators of law and right, have sullied their dignity,—Jesus dives at once into their conscience, flurried already with fear and guilt, and asks, why such holy men, whom often he has seen listening to his daily teachings, should choose so ruffian a way, and so strange an hour, for a deed of public justice? Throughout the scenes which followed, you well know how Jesus maintained the same majestic and unruffled spirit; seeming nobler with every indignity, and of prompter self-forgetfulness with every added suffering; yet visibly agitating every person before whom he was brought, with the consciousness of crime and horror in the transactions of which he was the forgiving victim. Look where we may, it is clear that resentment had not the faintest share in

Christ's feelings towards wrong : that the wrong was directed against himself, afforded no inducement for a severer or more excited estimate of its enormity. He put it at a distance from him : its relations to its authors and to others impressed him more than the suffering it brought upon himself ; and every one must perceive that his eye is fixed, not on its cruelty, but on its awfulness, its blindness, its guilt.

Yet did Jesus give no sanction to the morbid doctrine of a sentimental fatalism, which forbids us ever to be angry with the wicked, talks whiningly of our common frailty, draws an immoral comfort from God's way of educing good from evil, and comprises all possible cases of duty to wrong-doers under one formula, 'Pity and forgive.' In nothing do we notice the depth and truth of his moral perception more clearly than in his different treatment of vice in its several forms and stages. When he comes before 'Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites,' we do not hear the tones of forgiveness, the pleadings of the mild apologist for human infirmity, the effeminate offer of a futile pity. He pours forth an intense stream of natural indignation, and blights them with the flash of a terrible invective ; he tears the veil from every foul purpose, and with severe justice brands every deed with its own black name. Here, exposure, not compassion, is the proper impulse and duty of a noble mind : for the people must no longer be deluded, their reason perplexed with wretched quibbles, and their too-trusting conscience corrupted by the sophistries of sin. It were poor generosity, from tenderness to a selfish faction, to let the good heart of a nation die. Nay, even for these deceivers themselves, this expression of moral anger was precisely the most salutary appeal. For it echoed

the secret sentence of their own hearts, with which compassion would have been altogether discordant. The self-condemnation, only whispered before, it sent in thunder through their hollow souls; bringing many a hearer to tremble at the shock, who would have scoffed at pity as a weak and puling thing. This principle, of simply giving voice to the present sentiments of the conscience, and administering the feelings for which its natural justice was making a demand, Jesus appears intuitively to have followed in all his dealings with the vicious. When he reclined at the table of the Pharisee, and shocked him by allowing a woman who had been a sinner to find admission on the plea of discipleship, and the new reverential affections of her nature broke forth in passionate gratitude, he gave no check and no rebuke, nor simply a cautious sanction. The convictions which rebuke serves to awaken, were already there: to reproach would be to crush the fallen: she had discovered the depth of her misery, and yearned for the profound compassion suited to so great a woe: Jesus knew that one who had been stricken by a love so pure and penitential as hers, needed only to have that love fostered and trained to act; and so, casting himself with a bold faith on the capacities of a truly melted soul, he declared her sins forgiven. But where again no such penitence appeared, and to resort to him was not spontaneous but compulsory, as in the case of the woman taken in adultery, he observed a striking neutrality of treatment. To a mind heated with so dreadful and public a shame, to administer reproach would be cruelty, to give consolation would be danger; and he simply wards off the savage penalties of the law, and turns all his direct dealings upon her foul and sanctimonious informers. Their conscience persuades them that he knows their

secret history, and they skulk away, the accused instead of the accusers; while on the people that stand by is impressed the awful truth, that sinners are not fit to judge of sin. The blindness which is induced by all deliberate injury to our moral nature, and which thickens its film as the habit grows, is one of the most appalling expressions of the justice of God. Moral evil is the only thing in his creation of which it is decreed, that the more we are familiar with it, the less shall we know of it. The mind that is rich in holiness and the humanities, appreciates every temptation, computes the force of every passion, and discerns the degradation of every vice, with a precision and clearness unknown to the adept in wrong. When that wretched woman stood alone and confounded before Christ, how little did she know of her own abased and abject mind, how much less of the majestic being before her, whose steady eye, as it looked upon her, she could not meet! yet how vividly, and with what results of considerate yet cautious sympathy, did the disorder of her moral nature present itself to him who knew no defilement! Like the pure and silent stars that look down by night upon the foulness and the din of cities, his heavenly spirit gazed direct into the turbid hiding-places of sin. He saw it indeed, simply as it will see itself in retrospect; not perhaps any retrospect in this life; but such as may be inevitable, when the exchange of worlds takes place; when the urgency of pursuit and the distractions of amusement shall have ceased, and left us alone with our characters and our God; when, one order of employments being ended, and the other not yet commenced, there comes the appointed pause for thought and judgment; and having waved the last adieu, we flit away along that noiseless journey, on which we bear with us

only the memory of the Past, to knock at the awful gates of the unopened Future.

What that retrospect may be, it is fearful, but not impossible, to think. To aid the thought, it has been remarked by one of the most distinguished physical philosophers of our own day, that no atmospheric vibration ever becomes extinct; that the pulses of speech, when they have done their work and become to our ears inaudible, pass in waves away, but wander still, reflected hither and thither, through the regions of the air eternally. He conceives that, as the atmosphere comprises still within itself the distinct trace of every sound impressed on any portion of it, as thus the record indestructibly exists, we have only to suffer a change of position, and receive the endowment of an acuter sense, to hear again every idle word that we have spoken, and every sigh that we have caused. The truth is, that already, and within the limits of our mental nature, there is a power that will effect all this; it is fully within the scope of our natural faculties of association and memory. It may be doubted whether any idea once in the mind is ever lost, and past recall: it may drop, indeed, into the gulf of forgotten things and the waves of successive thought roll over it; but there are in nature possible and even inevitable convulsions which may displace the waters, heave up the deep, and disentomb whatever may be fair or hideous there. There needs only that associated objects should be presented, and the whole past, its most trivial features even,—the remnant of a schoolboy task or the mere snatches of a dream,—will rise up to view. Make but a pilgrimage to the scenes of your early days, when more than half of life is gone; wander again over the peaceful fields, and stand on the brink of the yet

gliding stream, that were the witnesses of youthful sports and cares ; and are they not the records of them too ? Does not remembrance seem inspired and commissioned to render back the dead ? And do they not come crowding on your sense,—faces and voices, and moving shapes, and the tones of bells, and the very feelings too which these things awakened once ? It is remarkable how slight a suggestion is occasionally sufficient to bring back vast trains of emotion. There are cases in which some particular function of the memory acquires an exquisite sensibility : and usually, as if God would warn us what must happen when our moral nature is divorced from the physical, it is the memory of conscience that maintains this preternatural watch. In many an hospital of mental disease (as it is called) you have doubtless seen a melancholy being, pacing to and fro with rapid strides, and lost to everything around ; wringing his hands in incommunicable suffering, and letting fall a low mutter rising quickly into the shrill cry ; his features cut with the graver of sharp anguish ; his eyelids drooping (for he never sleeps), and showering ever scalding tears. It is the maniac of remorse ; possibly indeed made wretched by merely imaginary crimes ; but just as possibly maddened by too true a recollection, and what the world would esteem too scrupulous a conscience. Listen to him, and you will often be surprised into fresh pity, to find how seemingly slight are the offences,—injuries perhaps of mere unripened thought,—which feed the fires, and whirl the lash, of this incessant woe. He is the dread type of Hell. He is absolutely sequestered (as any mind may be hereafter), incarcerated alone with his memories of sin ; and that is all. He is unconscious of objects and unaware of time : and every guilty soul

may find itself, likewise, standing alone in a theatre peopled with the collected images of the ills that he has done; and turn where he may, the features he has made sad with grief, the eyes he has lighted with passion, the infant faces he has suffused with needless tears, stare upon him with insufferable fixedness. And if thus the Past be truly indestructible; if thus its fragments may be regathered; if its details of evil thought and act may be thus brought together and fused into one big agony,—why, it may be left to ‘fools’ to ‘make a mock at sin.’

XV.

THE STRENGTH OF THE LONELY.

JOHN XVI. 32.

BEHOLD, THE HOUR COMETH, YEA, IS NOW COME, THAT YE SHALL BE
SCATTERED, EVERY MAN TO HIS OWN, AND SHALL LEAVE ME ALONE:
AND YET I AM NOT ALONE, BECAUSE THE FATHER IS WITH ME.

THE different degrees of self-reliance felt by different minds occasion some of the most marked diversities in the moral characters of men. There is a species of dependence upon others, altogether distinct from empty-minded imitation; implying no incapacity of thought, no imbecility of judgment, but often connected with the best attributes of genius and the choicest fruits of cultivation. It is a tendency which has its root in the sensitive, not in the intellectual part of our nature; and grows, not from the shallowness of the reason, but from the depth of the affections. It arises indeed from a disproportion between these two departments of the mind; and would disappear, if force were either added to the understanding, or deducted from the feelings. It is the dependence of an affectionate mind, capable, it may be, of manifesting great power, but trembling to feel itself alone;—of a mind that has a natural affinity for sympathy, and cannot endure its loss or its postponement; but, on whatever

course of thought or action the faculties may launch forth, finds them insensibly tending towards it for shelter. This temper is not to be confounded with the vulgar and selfish craving after applause, that has no test of truth and right but the voice of a multitude, and will sell its conscience to buy off a frown. The feeling to which I refer cares not for numbers or for praise ; it deprecates nothing but perfect solitude. It has but one reservation in its pursuit of truth and reverence for duty ; that they shall not drift it away from every human support. Place near it some one approving and fraternal heart, and its self-respect rises at once ; it can listen unabashed to scorn ; it can stand up against a menace with dignity ; it can thrust aside resistance with energy. Lay to rest the trembling spirit of humanity within ; and the diviner impulses of the soul will start to their supremacy.

This state of mind may be illustrated by reference to its extreme opposite ; and the contrast may bring out in clearer light the strength and weaknesses of both. There are persons to be occasionally found whose minds appear to perform their operations as if they were in empty space ; who reflect, and plan, and feel in secret ; of whose processes of thought no one knows anything more than happens to be indicated by the result ; who look on men and events only as instruments for the execution of their designs ; who are little damped by universal discouragement, or elated by universal approbation ; and rarely modify an opinion or repent of a feeling, however singular may be their position in maintaining it. If others agree with their designs, it is so much force to be reckoned in their favour ; if they disagree, it is so much resistance to be overcome. Human ties are formed, and their energies are not

improved ; are broken, and their energies are not weakened. In trouble, they apply themselves so promptly to the remedy, that, when you offer your sympathy, it is not wanted : they are fond of the maxim, 'a good man is satisfied from himself ;' and so truly act upon it, that the genial heart and helping hand instinctively shrink back from their hard complacent presence.

Each of these two forms of human character has a certain species of power of its own. He who is independent of sympathy is remarkable for power over himself. In speculation, his mind operates free from all disturbing forces : he goes apart with his subject of contemplation, surveys it with a serene eye, converses with it as an abstraction, having no concern with any living interest. His faculties obey his summons, and perform their task with vigour, paralyzed by no anxiety, ruffled by no doubt, never lingering to plead awhile for some dear old error before it go, nor pausing to take the leap to truth entirely new. In action, his volitions are executed at once ; nothing intervenes (assuming him to be a man of honest purpose) between his seeing a course of wisdom and rectitude, and his taking it : he yields nothing to his own habits ; he waits for no man's support ; if men give it, it will show their good sense ; if they withhold it, it is the worse for themselves. He scorns concession either to others or to himself ; not in truth comprehending the temptation to it. The past and the human have no power over him ; he needs no gathering of strength to tear himself away ; all his roots strike at once into his own present convictions ; and whatever opposition may beat on him from the elements around does but serve to harden them to rock, and fix them there with immutable tenacity.

On the other hand, he who is dependent on human

sympathy acquires far greater power over others. He reflects and reciprocates the emotions of other minds ; he understands their prejudices ; he is no stranger to their weaknesses ; he does not stare at their impulses, like a being too sublime to comprehend them. He may not obtain that kind of distant respect which is yielded to the man of cold but acute and confident intellect ;—a respect which is founded in fear,—which suppresses opposition without winning trust,—which silences objectors without relieving their objections ;—that unsatisfactory respect which we feel when conscious that another is right, without perceiving *where* it is that we are wrong. But he may earn that better power, which arises from profound and affectionate knowledge of the human heart. There is no human being to whom we look with so true a faith, as to him who shows himself deep-read in the mysteries within us ; who seems to have dwelt where Omniscience only had access, and traced momentary lines of feeling whose rapid flash our own eye could scarcely follow ; who puts into words weaknesses which we had hardly dared to confess in thought ; who appears to have trembled with our own anxieties, and wept our very tears. This initiation into the interior nature is the quality which, above all others, gives one mind power over another. If it comes upon us from the living tones of a friendly voice, we listen as to the breathings of inspiration ; if it act on us only from the pages of a book, the enchantment is hardly less potent. That a being, distant and unknown, perhaps departed, should have so penetrated our subtlest emotions, and caught our most transient attitudes of thought, should have so detected our sophistries of conscience, and witnessed the miseries of our temptations, and known the sacredness of

our affections, as to reveal us anew even to ourselves, truly seems the greatest of the triumphs of genius. It is a triumph peculiar to those who love the sympathies of their kind, and, because they love them, instinctively appreciate and understand them. It is essentially the triumph which Christ won when the minions of tyranny and hypocrisy shrunk back from him in awe, saying, 'Never man spake like this man.'

With this quality, however, great feebleness of will, and even total prostration of moral power, may sometimes be found combined; and we may almost say, the greater the intellectual endowments, the more likely is this to be the case. If ordinary minds want sympathy before they can act freely, they can easily obtain it; their ideas and feelings are of the common staple of humanity, and some one who has them too may be found across the street. But if those of finer mould should have the same dependence of heart, it may prove a sore affliction and temptation to them; for who will respond to the desires, and aims, and emotions most dear to them? They wed themselves to a benevolent scheme;—it is thrust aside as a chimera. They demonstrate a truth of startling magnitude;—it is acknowledged and passed by. They describe some misery of the poor, the child, or the guilty;—the world weeps, and the oppression is untouched. They pour forth their conceptions of perfect character, and seek to refresh in men's minds the bewildered sentiment of right; every conscience approves, and not a volition stirs. And thus they are left alone, without the practical support of a single sympathy: what wonder that they think in one way, and act in another, when the world reverences their thoughts, and ridicules their actions? Compelled by their nature to desire what

they are forbidden by men to execute; unable to love anything but that which is pronounced to be fit only for a dream; secretly dwelling within a beauty of excellence which they would be held insane to realize,—what wonder is it, if their practical energies die of dearth,—if they begin to doubt their nobler nature, and, while cherishing it in private, dishonour it in the world,—if the pure sincerity of their mind is thus at length broken down, and they soil in act the spirit which they sanctify in thought; and life wastes away in habits, on which the meditations of privacy pour a flood of ineffectual shame, and in impulses to better things, more and more passionate, as the springs of the will become broken, and prayers for peace of more mournful earnestness, as the vision sinks into melancholy distance?

But the dangers of an excessive dependence upon sympathy are by no means confined to minds of this order. There are, within the range of every man's life, processes of mind which must be solitary; passages of duty which throw him absolutely upon his individual moral forces, and admit of no aid whatever from another. Alone we must stand sometimes; and if our better nature is not to shrink into weakness, we must take with us the thought which was the strength of Christ; 'Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me.' Jesus was evidently susceptible, in a singular degree, to the influence of human attachments; he was the type of that form of character. Such indeed it behoved one to be who was to be regarded as the perfect model of humanity; for while the self-relying and solitary temper rarely, if ever, acquires the grace and bloom of human sympathies, the mind, originally affectionate, often, by efforts of moral principle, rises to independent strength; the sense of right can more readily indurate

the tender, than melt the rocky soul. And that is the most finished character which begins in beauty, and ends in power; which wins its way to loftiness through a host of angelic humanities that would sometimes hold it back; that leans on the love of kindred while it may, and when it may not, can stand erect in the love of God; that shelters itself amid the domesticities of life, while duty wills, and when it forbids, can go forth under the expanse of immortality, and face any storm that beats, and traverse any wilderness that lies, beneath that canopy. The sentiment of Christ in my text, carried into the solitary portions of our existence, is the true power by which to acquire this perfection. What these solitary portions are will readily occur to every thoughtful mind. An example or two may be briefly noticed.

The vigils of sickness,—of those, I mean, who watch by the bed of sickness,—are solitary beyond expression. What loneliness like that, which is the more dreadful in proportion as the friend stretched at our right hand is more beloved? Those midnight hours, poised between life and death, that seem to belong neither to time nor to eternity,—claimed by time, when we listen to the tolling clock,—by eternity, when we hear that moaning breath; that silence, so solid that we cannot breathe into it, so awful that we dare not weep, and which yet we shudder to hear broken by the mutterings of delirium; that confused flitting of thoughts across our exhausted minds, strangely mingling the trivial and the solemn,—beginning perhaps from the grotesque shapes of a moonlit cloud, then sinking us deep into dreams of the past, till a rustling near calls us to give the cup of cold water, and that fevered eye that looks on us makes us think, where soon will be the

perturbed spirit that lights it!—O, what relief can there be to this agony, what trust amid this despair, but in the remembrance, ‘I am not alone, for my Father is with me?’ Serene as the star in the cool heavens without, gentle as the loving heart whose ebbing life we watch, his Infinite Mind has its vigils with us,—the vigils of eternal Providence, beneath whose eye, awake alike over both worlds, sorrow and death vanish away. Into what peace do the terrible aspects of things around subside under that thought! We are no longer broken upon the wheel of fatalism, given over to fruitless and unmeaning suffering: the feeling that life is going wrong, that all things are dropping into wreck, disappears. We rise to a loftier point of view, and perceive how all this may lie within the perfect order of benignity; how death in this world may be determined by the laws of birth into another; how our sensitive is connected with our moral nature, and from deep trial great strength may grow,—the capacious and enduring mind, the hardy and athletic will, the refined and gentle heart, the devoted spirit of duty. Enfolded within the Divine Paternity, we have one fixed and tranquil object of our thoughts. From that centre of repose we can look forth on the fitfulness of sickness without despair; the flying shadows of fear seem cast by an orb of everlasting light. He that in this spirit meets the trembling moments of life, will gather the sublimest power from events that seem to crush him, and come forth from the mourner’s watch, not with wasted and haggard mind, not morose and selfish, not with passive and helpless air, as if waiting to be the sport of every blast that beats,—but with uplifted conscience, with distincter purpose, with will meeker towards others, and sterner towards self, and

character tending towards the energy of the hero, and the calmness of the saint.

Again, we must be solitary when we are tempted. The management of the character, the correction of evil habits, the suppression of wrong desires, the creation of new virtues,—this is a work strictly individual, with which no ‘stranger intermeddleth,’ in which the sympathy of friends may be deceptive, and our only safety is in a superhuman reliance. The relation of the human being to God is altogether personal: there can be no partnership in its responsibilities. Our moral convictions must have an undivided allegiance; and to withhold our reverence till they are supported by the suffrages of others, is an insult which they will not bear. What can those even who read us best know of our weaknesses and wants and capabilities? They would have to clothe themselves with our very consciousness, before they could be fit advisers here. How often does their very affection become our temptation, cheat us out of our contrition, and lead us to adopt some pleasant theory about ourselves, in place of the stern and melancholy truth! How often does their erring judgment lead us to indolence and self-indulgence, to a dalliance with our infirmities, and a fatal patience with our sins! If indeed there were a more prevalent conscientiousness in the distribution of praise and blame,—if all men felt how serious a thing it is to dispense such mighty powers,—friends might consult together with greater security respecting their moral failures and obligations: penitence might pour itself forth into a species of auricular confession no less safe than natural: the sense of wrong would become more profound, when the violation of duty had shaped itself into words; and the secret suggestions and resolves of

conscience be doubly strong, when echoed by the living voice of human tenderness. Even then, however, we must vigilantly guard our own moral perceptions, clear the atmosphere between them and Heaven, and allow no sophistry to shade us from the eye of God. At best, we must often have to forego all sympathy: none can be with us in our multiform temptations. Many a purpose fit only for ourselves, suited to the peculiarities of our own character and condition, we must take up in private, and in silence pile up effort after effort, till it be accomplished. And in these lonely struggles of duty, in this invisible repression of wrong impulses and maintenance of great aims, the inevitable loss of human aid must be replaced by our affinity with God. While He is with us we are not alone. He that invented human virtue, and breathed unto us our private veneration for its greatness,—He that loves the martyr spirit, scorning suffering for the sake of truth,—He that beholds in every faithful mind the reflection of himself,—He that hath built an everlasting world, at once the shelter of victorious goodness, and the theatre of its yet nobler triumphs,—enwraps us in his immensity, and sustains us by his love. The sooner we learn to lean on Him, and find comfort in the society of God, the better are we prepared for every solemn passage of our existence. It is well, ere we depart, to confide ourselves sometimes to the invisible: for *then* at least we must be thrust forth upon it in a solitude personal as well as moral. The dying make that pass alone: human voices fade away; human forms retire; familiar scenes sink from sight; and silent and lonely the spirit migrates to the great secret. Who would not feel himself then beneath the all-sheltering wing, and say amid the mystic space, ‘I am not alone, for the Father is with me?’

XVI.

HAND AND HEART.

JOHN XIV. 23.

IF A MAN LOVE ME, HE WILL KEEP MY WORDS; AND MY FATHER WILL LOVE HIM, AND WE WILL COME UNTO HIM, AND MAKE OUR ABODE WITH HIM.

THERE is no point in theoretical morality more difficult to determine (if we may judge from the disputes of philosophers) than the comparative worth and mutual relation of good *affections* and good *actions*. Ought it to be the direct and primary aim of the teacher of duty to produce a harvest of beneficent deeds? or to impart clear perceptions and prompt sensibility of conscience in relation to right and wrong? If the former, his instructions will present an inventory and careful valuation of all possible 'voluntary acts;' and his exhortations be addressed to the hopes and fears, to the prudential apprehensions of good and evil, which operate immediately upon the will. If the latter, he will meddle little with cases of casuistry, or problems which exhibit duty as an object of doubt; will define and illuminate the secret image of right that dwells within every mind; and present as incentives those models of high faith and disinterested virtue which kindle the reverence of the heart. In this country, especially among those who have been most anxious to 'enlighten'

its religion, the predominant attention has been given to external morality. The practical temper of the English, impatient of loud profession and sanctimonious inconsistency, reasonably enough cried out for '*fruit*.' Philosophy caught this spirit, and embodied it in a system of no small pretensions. Seeing that fine sentiments are worthless without good deeds, the masters of this school have decided, that the affections have *no* excellence except as instruments for producing action; that, intrinsically, they are all alike, without any distinction of good or bad; that moral qualities *primarily* attach merely to practice, *derivatively* only to the mental tendencies towards practice, and in any case are *constituted* by the *effects* of conduct in producing enjoyment or pain; that the moralist has no concern with the motives of an agent, provided he does that which is useful; that the only measure of virtue, in short, is the amount of pleasure it creates.

This system has been embraced and is still held by many Christians, chiefly among the churches within the sphere of Dr. Priestley's influence. It is expounded, in a form full of inconsistency and compromise, by Dr. Paley, in a work whose popularity appears to me rather a discredit to England than an honour to him: and though it has been a general favourite with irreligious moralists, and appears in natural reaction from the enthusiasm of the most earnest pietists, it has seldom been considered hostile to Christianity itself. This is no fit occasion for discussing its philosophical pretensions: and were it not for the extent and nature of its practical influence, it might be abandoned to the Academic Lecture-room, where the rigorous methods of thought necessary for its examination would not be misplaced. But there is one particular view of it which

may naturally enough be presented here. Its characteristic sentiment may be placed side by side with those of the Christian Morals, and the relation between them ascertained. And no one, I imagine, can perceive in it a trace of Christ's peculiar spirit: few surely can be wholly unconscious of the wide variance between its leading ideas and his: and all who have abandoned their minds to the impression of his teachings, must feel that he assigned a very different rank to the affectionate elements of character; that, not content with tasking the hand, he makes high demands upon the heart; that public benefit is subordinate with him to personal perfection; and that, instead of merging the individual mind in the advantage of society, he is silent of the happiness of society, except as involved in the holiness of the individual. Nothing surely can be further from the spirit of Jesus than to measure excellence by the magnitude of its effects, rather than the purity of its principle: else he would never have ranked the widow's mite above the vast donatives of vanity; or have praised the profuse affection of the penitent that lavished on him costly offerings, esteeming them yet less precious than the consecrating tribute of her tears. Here, it was not the deed whose usefulness gave worth to the disposition, but the disposition whose excellence gave value to the deed. And this is everywhere the character of Christianity. It plants us directly beneath an eye that looketh at the heart: it forgives, in that we 'have loved much': it throws away without compunction the largest husk of ceremony, and treasures up the smallest seed of life: instead of sharpening us for casuistry, it prostrates us in worship; reveals to us our inner nature, by bringing us in contact with God who is a Spirit, and to whom we bear

the likeness of child to parent ; gives us an intermediate image of him and of ourselves, Christ the meek and merciful, whose life was a prolonged expression of disinterestedness and love ; and imposes, as the sole condition of discipleship, 'faith in him,'—implicit trust, that is, in the spirit of his mind ;—self-precipitation upon a piety and fidelity like his, without concession to expediency, without faltering in danger, without flight from suffering, without slackened step, though duty should conduct us straight into the arms of ignominy and death.

That Christianity does make high demands upon our affections must then be admitted. Indeed this is virtually confessed by the enthusiastic forms into which it has burst, by the outbreak of fervour from which every new church is born, and the eager efforts made to sustain this vivid life. Nay, it is privately confessed by every cold and languid yet honest heart, that cannot lay open before it the story of Christ, without the secret consciousness of rebuke. It is confessed by the anxieties of many good minds, that are ashamed of the slow fires and faint light of their faith and love ; that can spur their will, more easily than kindle their affections ; and wish they were called upon only to *do*, and not also to *feel*. They cast about the vaguest and vainest efforts after deeper impressions of things holy and sublime : they wonder at the apathy with which they dwell amid the infinitude of God : they convince themselves how *untrue* is that state of mind which treats the 'seen and temporal' as if there were no 'unseen and eternal ;' they assure themselves how terrible must be the disorder of that soul, whose springs of pure emotion are thus locked in death. But with all *this* they cannot shame, or reason, or terrify them-

selves into any nobler glow : the avenues of intellect, and judgment, and fear, are not those by which a new feeling is permitted to visit and refresh the heart. The ice cannot thaw itself ; but must ask the warmer gales of heaven to blow, and the sun aloft to send more piercing beams. There is nothing vainer or more hopeless than the direct struggles of the mind to transform its own affections, to change by a fiat of volition the order of its tastes, and the intensity of its love. Self-inspiration is a contradiction : and to suspend, by upheavings of the will, the force of habitual desire, is no less impossible than, by writhings of the muscles, to annihilate our own weight.

This, you will say, is a hard doctrine ; that our religion demands that which our nature forbids,—invites a regeneration of the heart, after which the will may strive in vain. Yet, I think, you must be conscious of its truth, and acknowledge that no spasm of determination can make you regard with hate that which is now an object of your love. But if Christianity presents the perplexity, its spirit affords the solution. It shows us, indeed, that to gain a pure and noble mind, great in its aims, resolute in its means, strong with the invincibility of conscience, yet mellowed with reverential love, is the end of all our discipline here. But it nowhere encourages a direct aim at this end, as if it could be reached by the struggles of a day or of a year : it nowhere invites a morbid gaze upon our own feelings, as if by self-vigilance we could look ourselves into perfection. In Christ it furnishes us with an image of divinest beauty that we may turn our eye on *that*, not upon ourselves : and perverse, even to disease, is the temper, which, instead of being engaged with *that* sublimest work of the great Sculptor of souls,

whines rather over its own deformity, and seeks to cure it by unnatural contortions. Christianity sends each faculty of our nature to its proper office; our veneration, to Christ; our wills, to their duty. It precipitates us on Action as the proper school of Affection; and, reversing the moralist's principle, values not the pure heart as the tool for producing serviceable deeds, but the good deeds as at once the expression and the nourishment of that greatest of possessions, a good mind. It was not by retiring into himself, but by going out of himself, that Christ overcame the world; not by spiritual pathology and self-torture, but by veritable 'sufferings,' that he 'became perfect;' not by measuring his own emotions, but by oblivion of them amid a crowd of toils, a succession of fulfilled resolves, a profuse expenditure of life and effort having others for their object, that he rose above the dignity of men, and ripened the divinest spirit for the skies.

Struck then by the word of Christ, the moral paralytic must 'take up his bed and walk.' It is surprising how practical duty enriches the fancy and the heart; and action clears and deepens the affections. Like the run into the green fields and morning air to the fevered limbs and tightened brow of the night-student, it circulates a stream of unspeakable refreshment, 'and renews our strength as the eagle's.' Indeed, no one can have a true idea of right, until he does it; any genuine reverence for it, till he has done it often and with cost; any peace ineffable in it, till he does it always and with alacrity. Does any one complain, that the best affections are transient visitors with him, and the heavenly spirit a stranger to his heart? O let him not go forth, on any strained wing of thought, in distant quest of them; but rather stay

at home, and set his house in the true order of conscience; and of their own accord the divinest guests will enter; he hath 'kept the words' of Christ, and the 'Father himself will love him,' and they 'will come unto him, and make their abode with him.' The man most gifted with genius and rich in intellectual wisdom, but withal barren of practice and self-indulgent, can call up before him no conception of moral excellence so authentic, so divine, as many an obscure disciple, who, through frequent tribulation, has done and borne the perfect will of God. Even the smallest discontent of conscience may render turbid the whole temper of the mind; but only produce the effort that restores its peace, and over the whole atmosphere a breath of unexpected purity is spread; doubt and irritability pass as clouds away; the withered sympathies of earth and home open their leaves and live: and through the clearest blue the deep is seen of the heaven where God resides. And here too we may observe the opposite effects which action and experience produce upon our *preconceptions* of wrong and of right. Do the right, and your ideal of it grows and perfects itself. Do the wrong, and your ideal of it breaks up and vanishes. The young and pure mind, stranger yet to the vehemence of appetite and revenge, looks on sin as a dreadful and demon image, and shrinks with awe from its approach; shudders at the laugh of guilty revelry, and gazes on the face of acknowledged crime, as if it were a phantom of the abyss. Guilt is then a thing unearthly and præternatural, whose grasp is more terrible than death. And truly, *if* this being, now innocent, should ever become its prey, it will be through a struggle deep and deadly, as with the tender mercies of a fiend. But once let that struggle be over, *and the fiend vanishes for ever; passes into plain flesh*

and blood, that 'is by no means so dreadful as was imagined;' nay, even assumes the air of the jovial companion, and turns the dance of death into a comedy. The *true* 'superstition' of early years flies before the *false* 'experience' of maturity. The ideal, so much juster than the actual, is gone; and there falls upon the heart that folly which 'makes a mock at sin.'

In saying that action is the school of affection, it is clear that we cannot mean mere manual or physical labour, or activity in business, or even the mechanical routine of any practical life, however unexceptionable be its habits. The regularities of constitutional goodness, the order of a simply blameless existence, do not reach that pitch of energy which sustains the noblest health of the soul: these may continue their accustomed course, and yet the springs of inward life and strength dry up. In the mere negative virtue which abstains from gross outward wrong, which commits neither theft, nor cruelty, nor excess, and paces the daily round of usage, there is not necessarily any principle of immortal growth. The force requisite to maintain it becomes continually less, as the obstructions are worn down by ceaseless attrition; and the character may hence become simply automatic, performing a series of regularities with the smallest expenditure of soul. To nourish high affections, worthy of a nature that hath kindred with the Father of spirits, more than this is needed: positive and creative power, spontaneous and original force, conquering energy of resolve, must be put forth: from the inner soul some central strength must pass upon the active life, to destroy that equilibrium between within and without which makes our days mere self-repetitions, and to *give us a progressive history*. There is a connexion *profound and beautiful* between the affectionate and

the self-denying character of Christianity. The voluntary sacrifices feed the involuntary sympathies of virtue : and he that will daily *suffer* for his duty, nor lay his head to rest till he has renounced some ease, embraced some hardship, in the service of others and of God, shall replenish the fountains of his holiest life ; and shall find his soul not settling into the flat and stagnant marsh, but flowing under the most delicious light of heaven above, over the gladdest fields of Providence below. I know that the moralists of whom I have before spoken,—they that turn the shrine of duty into a shop for weighing grains and scruples of enjoyment,—entertain a great horror of the notion of self-sacrifice, and ridicule the doctrine of denial as ascetic. Any interference with the luxury of virtue is to be deplored ; disturbance to its repose must be admitted to be disagreeable, and, ‘ so far as it goes, an evil : ’ and though clashing pleasures will sometimes present themselves, we must take care never to let go the nearer, till we have in our hands the title-deeds of the remoter. It is surprising, we are told, how pleasant a thing true goodness is, if we will only believe it. It may be so ; or it may not be so : but at all events he who goes to it in this spirit has no true heart for it, and shall be refused the thing he seeks. God will have us surrender without terms ; and till then, we are fast prisoners, and not free children, in his universe. So needful is sacrifice to the health and hardihood of conscience, that if the occasions for it do not present themselves spontaneously in our lot, we must create them for ourselves : not reserving to ourselves those exercises of virtue which are constitutionally pleasant, but, on the contrary, esteeming the asperity of a duty as the reason why we should quit

our hand to it at once ; not acquiescing in the facility of wisely-adjusted habits, but accepting the ease of living well as the peremptory summons of God to live better. He, in short, is no true soldier of the Lord, nor worthy to bear the Christian armour, who, in service so high, will not make an hour's forced march of duty every day. So tasked and tested, the inner power, the athletic vigour, of our moral nature, will not waste and die. The perceptions of goodness, beauty, truth, become, when we are thus faithful, singularly clear : there ripens within us the fullest faith in the moral excellence of God ; the ties that bind us to him and to his children are drawn more closely round ; and in this world we dwell as in the lower mansion of his house, where also the ' Father loveth us, and maketh his abode with us.'

By such practical performance alone, can any genuine love of man be matured in us. Beneficence is the true school of benevolence. We are not to wait, till some descending spirit, uninvoked and unearned, enters us, and makes the labour of sympathy delightful ; but to go and do the deed of mercy, though it be with reluctant step, with dry and parched spirit, and without the grace of a free charity. Perhaps we may return with more genial mind and liberated affections : and if *not*, we must the sooner and the oftener do the act of blessing again, though it be amid self-rebuke and shame, and recoil with no peace upon the soul. He that with patience will become the almoner of God to the poor and sad, and ask no portion of the blessing for himself, shall catch the spirit of the Divine love at length : those whom he steadfastly benefits he will rejoice in at the end. Even with God this is the order too : we begin with being his beneficiaries, and end with being his children. He created us first (and that was blessing),

placed us in the glory and immensity of his universe, and conferred upon us the high capacities and multi-form nature that make us his own image: and then regarded us with his Divine affectionateness, and embraced us in his Everlasting Fatherhood.

By such practical performance alone, can we dismiss the clouds of doubt and ignoble mistrust, which, really covering our own disordered minds, seem to cast shadows around the Most High, and to blot out the heavens from us. The merely worldly man, interred amid mean cares, doubts the majestic truths of religion, simply from their sublimity and vastness, which render them incommensurable with his poor fraction of a mind: let him go and do a few noble deeds, and elevate the proportions of his nature, and it is wonderful what mighty things seem to become possible: Deity is near and even present at once, and immortality not improbable. And as for the self-inclosed and anxious student, his difficulties may be referred to the diseased and ascendant activity of a subtle understanding, without the materials of a deep moral experience on which to work. Let him remedy this fatal dearth; rouse the slumbering strength of conscience; and, quitting the theoretic problems, take up the practical responsibilities of life: and his work will clear his thought, rendering it not less acute, and more confiding and reverential. Seeing more into his own nature, he will penetrate further into all else, especially the source whence it proceeds, the scene in which it is, and the issue to which it tends. Of all depressing scepticism, of all painful solicitude, not the agility of thought, but the alacrity of duty, is the fit antagonist. At least, *until* we do the will of God, it becomes doubt to be humble: and *when* we do it, assuredly it will be yet humbler.

XVII.

SILENCE AND MEDITATION.

PSALM LXIII. 6.

I REMEMBER THEE UPON MY BED, AND MEDITATE ON THEE IN THE
NIGHT-WATCHES.

THE elder Protestant moralists laid great stress, in all their teachings, on the duties of self-scrutiny and prayer. And though their complaints show that there was a frequent neglect of their injunctions, it cannot be doubted that, in our forefathers' scheme of life, the exercise of lonely thought filled a much larger space than it does in ours. It was deemed shameful and atheistical to enter the closet for nothing but sleep, and quit it only for meals and trade: passing the awfulness of life entirely by, and evading all earnest contact with the deep and silent God. A sense of guilt attached to those who cast themselves from their civil life into their dreams, and back again. That the merchant or the statesman should be upon his knees, that the general should pass from his despatches to his devotions, and turn his eye from the hosts of battle to the host of heaven, was not felt to be incongruous or absurd. Milton's mind gave itself at once to the discord of politics below, and the symphonies of seraphim above: *Vane mingled* with the administration of colonies, and

accounts of the navy, hopes of a theocracy, and meditations on the millennium; and it was no more natural for Cromwell to call his officers to council than to prayer. Nay, without going back so far, there are few families of any standing, that do not inherit the pious diaries of some nearer ancestry, betraying how real and large a concern to them were the exercises of the solitary soul.

It cannot be denied that there is a great difference now. Not that Christians may not be found in many sects, and copiously in some, with whom the old devout habit is maintained in all integrity; of whose existence it is a simple and sincere ingredient; who still find an open door between heaven and earth, and pass in and out with free and earnest heart. But these represent the characteristic spirit of a former, rather than of the present age. The sentiments of our own times everywhere betray the growing encroachments of the outward upon the inward life. How different is our modern '*saying* our prayers' from those wrestlings of spirit, and groans and tears that convulsed the Covenanters of old: nay, how much is there in this,—that, unless there is a printed page before us, we know not what we want, and left to ourselves should scarcely find we had a want at all! Prayer by the printing-press is surely a very near approach to piety by machinery. The public changes in the faith of churches which are conspicuously taking place around us, indicate the same loss of depth and earnestness in personal religion: for what do the new doctrines say? 'I cannot stand alone with God, and seek his pity to my solitary soul; I must put myself into the visible church, and appropriate a share of his favour to that spiritual corporation; I can find no sanctification by direct contact of spirit with spirit, and must get it done for me through priests and sacra-

ments.' And what is this but an open proclamation that private audience with God has become impossible, and he can be approached only through ambassadors? Everywhere strength seems to have gone out from the devotional element of life. Those who display most of this element are no longer, like the Puritans, the *strongest* men of their day, most resolute, most simple, most powerful in debate, most direct in action; but are felt to be feminine and subtle, without manly breadth of natural heart, and firm footing upon reality. The moments each man spends in it are seldom his *truest* and most unforced; it is not, as once, the clear, deep eye of his nature that he turns to Heaven, but the dead and glassy; and he who is without his sincerity in his closet, and with only half of it at church, flings it all into the work of civil life. In individual character, and in society at large, power seems to have gone over from the spiritual to the secular.

This change is no fit subject for unmixed complaint; much less must we desire to terrify men, like culprits, into an alarm at their impiety, and an affected resumption of the ancient discipline. Old ways of life are not thrown aside, until they become untrue: and when they have become untrue, their sanctity is gone; though the usage of churches may plead for them, the laws of God are against them. Who can recommend prayer to one who has lost the heart to pray?—confession to one who is stricken by no penitence?—the words of trust to one whose God has gone into the darkness of Fate?—self-examination to one who, in too fine a knowledge of what passes within, finds no power to do the duty without? The *state of mind* which unfits men for the habits of our fathers, may be lower or may be *higher*; but be it what it may, there is no virtue in

retaining what has grown false : let all, in their belief or unbelief, their clearness or perplexity, ground themselves only upon reality, and live out the highest conviction not of yesterday but of to-day, and however the forms of our being may change, its spirit will remain unceasingly devout. If you ask, 'what is it that has rendered the lonely piety of our forefathers less natural and possible to us?' I believe the reason to be this :— their lot was cast near the age of the reformation; they breathed its spirit and lived its life; and as Protestantism was at first a simple insurrection against formalism and falsehood, and gave to the faith within the authority which it denied to the church without, so did it exclusively develop the inward religion of the soul, and put it in artificial contrast with outward interests and human duties. Installing the private conscience in the place of the anointed priest, it gave that conscience much of the priestly character, inquisitorial, casuistical, vigilant and stern; and sent a man, to his self-examination, as before he would have gone to his confessional, to question himself as the church would have questioned him before, only with severity more searching as his consciousness knew better what to ask. Hence arose an anxious scrupulosity of mind; a loss of all dependence except on the divine offices of the solitary soul; a feeling of terrible necessity for the help and strength of God; a keen scrutiny into all the doublings of the heart, and an apprehension of every sophistry of sin; passing over at once from the gay laxity of the Catholic into a grim and solemn earnestness. The change was noble and healthy, only, like all reactions, capable of excess. Men may learn too much of what goes on within them; their spiritual analysis may be too fine; a morbid self-consciousness

may be produced, which in giving sensitive knowledge, takes away practical power; and he who will microscopically look at the ultimate fibres of his life-roots, scrapes away the element in which they thrive, and withers them in the light by which he sees. We must ever grow from darkness and the earth; enough if the blossom and the fruit be worthy of the sunshine and the heaven. *Our* days witness a recoil from the extreme inwardness of our forefathers' religion: human affections warm us more; human duties are nobler in our view; social interests are of deeper moment; and the whole scene of man's visible life, no longer the mere vestibule of an invisible futurity, has a worth and dignity of its own, which philanthropy delights to honour, and only fanaticism can despise. For my own part, I think the change a sign of nature's restorative power, and see in it the stirrings of new health: even though partially brought about by temporary scepticism, I cannot deplore it, for it shows that the conscience cannot go on living in a pretence, but, in retreating from things of which it doubts, gets its foot upon duties which it knows. In this are the first beginnings of new religion to replace the old: if the divine earnestness within us only shifts and does not die, it matters little what becomes of our mere theology; and deep-hearted practical faithfulness is not separable long from true-thoughted practical faith.

Let us admit then that our revolt against the old spiritualism has come about in quite a natural way; that the Puritan sentiment was fast going down into mere moral hypochondria: and that, to work the cure, it was inevitable that the *world* (as divines opprobriously term it), *i.e.* the opportunities of action with a view to temporal good, whether personal or social, should

re-assert its sway. Like the sick physician, who cannot let his pulse alone or cease to speculate on his sensations, Christendom, bewildered by its own deep knowledge of the human heart, kept too inquiring a finger on the throbs of its emotions, and fancied many an action of healthy nature into a symptom of fatal disease: and we are not to find fault with the remedy of Providence—a turn-out into the open air and various industry of life; a resort to the plough, the loom, the ship, and all the arts by which it is given to man to make the earth at once his subject and his friend. But let us also admit that the outward life has for some time past tyrannized over us; extravagantly invading our private habits; narrowing our modes of thought and sentiment; benumbing our consciousness of a spiritual nature; and impairing to us the reality of God. Let us own that the Divine spirit is gone into distance and strangeness from us, and is hard to reach; that solitude brings no unspeakable converse, no ready consecration; that things just next the senses and the understanding seem nearer to us than those that touch the soul; that the crowd and noise are too close and constant on us, confusing our better perceptions, and leading us always to look round, seldom to look up; that the glare of the lamps has destroyed the midnight and put out the stars.

Now this despotism of the outward over the inward life, this suppression of every attribute not immediately wanted for business or society, is a misfortune which every noble mind will assuredly withstand. It is not right to live as if God were asleep, and Heaven only a murmur from his dreams. It should make some difference to a man, whether his Creator be here in the present, or gone off into the past; whether he himself dwells in the hollow of a living hand, or, with nothing

beyond him but necessity, struggles for his place in a dead, deserted world. And this difference will not be realized, nor any lofty truth of character attained, by those who disown the claims of lonely thought and silence in religion.

There is an act of the mind, natural to the earnest and the wise, impossible only to the sensual and the fool, healthful to all who are sincere, which has small place in modern usage, and which few can now distinguish from vacuity. Those who knew what it was, called it *meditation*. It is not *reading*, in which we apprehend the thoughts of others, and bring them to our critical tribunal. It is not *study*, in which we strive to master the known and prevail over it, till it lies in order beneath our feet. It is not *reasoning*, in which we seek to push forward the empire of our positive conceptions, and by combining what we have, reach others that we have not. It is not *deliberation*, which computes the particular problems of action, reckons up the forces that surround our individual lot, and projects accordingly the expedient or the right. It is not *self-scrutiny*, which by itself is only shrewdness or at most science turned within instead of without, and analyzing mental feelings instead of physical facts. Its view is not personal and particular, but universal and immense,—the sweep of the nocturnal telescope over the infinitely great, not the insight of the solar microscope into the infinitely small. It brings, not an intense self-consciousness and spiritual egotism, but almost a renunciation of individuality, a mingling with the universe, a lapse of our little drop of existence into the boundless ocean of being. It does not find for us our place in the known world, but loses it for us in the unknown. It puts nothing clearly beneath our feet,

but a vault of awful beauty above our head. It gives us no matter for criticism and doubt, but everything for wonder and for love. It does not suggest indirect demonstration, but furnishes immediate perception of things divine, eye to eye with the saints, spirit to spirit with God, peace to peace with Heaven. In thus being alone with the truth of things, and passing from shows and shadows into communion with the everlasting One, there is nothing at all impossible and out of reach. He is not faded or slow to bring us light, any more than is that sunshine of his, which is bright and swift as ever. He was no nearer to Christ on Tabor or in Gethsemane, than to us this day and every day. Neither the nature he inspires, nor his perennial inspiration, grows any older with the lapse of time; every human being that is born is a first man, fresh in this creation, and as open to Heaven as if Eden were spread round him; and every blessed kindling of faith and new sanctity is a touch of his spirit as living, a gift as immediate from his exhaustless store of holy power, as the strength that befriended Christ in temptation, and the angel-calm that closed his agony. Is it not promised for ever to the pure in heart that they shall see God? Let any true man go into silence; strip himself of all pretence, and selfishness; and sensuality and sluggishness of soul; lift off thought after thought, passion after passion, till he reaches the inmost depth of all; remember how short a time, and he was not at all; how short a time again, and he will not be here; open his window and look upon the night, how still its breath, how solemn its march, how deep its perspective, how ancient its forms of light; and think how little he knows except the perpetuity of God, and the mysteriousness of life:—and it will be strange if he does not feel the Eternal

- Presence as close upon his soul, as the breeze upon his brow; if he does not say, 'O Lord, art Thou ever near as this, and have I not known thee?'—if the true proportions and the genuine spirit of life do not open on his heart with infinite clearness, and show him the littleness of his temptations, and the grandeur of his trust. He is ashamed to have found weariness in toil so light, and tears where there was no trial to the brave. He discovers with astonishment how small the dust that has blinded him, and from the height of a quiet and holy love looks down with incredulous sorrow on the jealousies and fears and irritations that have vexed his life. A mighty wind of Resolution sets in strong upon him, and freshens the whole atmosphere of his soul; sweeping down before it the light flakes of difficulty, till they vanish like snow upon the sea. He is imprisoned no more in a small compartment of time, but belongs to an eternity which is now and here. The isolation of his separate spirit passes away; and with the countless multitude of souls akin to God, he is
- but as a wave of His unbounded deep. He is at one with Heaven, and hath found the secret place of the Almighty.

Silence is in truth the attribute of God; and those who seek him from that side invariably learn that meditation is not the dream but the reality of life; not its illusion but its truth; not its weakness but its strength. Such act of the mind is quite needful, in order to rectify the estimates of the senses and the lower understanding, to shake off the drowsy order of perceptions, in which, with the eyes of the soul half closed, we are apt to doze away existence here. Neglecting it now, we shall wake into it hereafter, and find that we have been walking in our sleep. It is necessary

even for preserving the truthfulness of our practical life. It is always the tendency of *action* to fall into routine and become mechanical; to become less and less dependent on the living forces of the Will, and to continue itself by mere momentum in the direction it has once assumed. When conscience and not passion presides over life, this tendency is not abated but confirmed: for conscience is essentially *systematic*, subdues everything to a fixed order, and then is troubled or content, according as this is violated or observed. But the inner spirit of the mind, which all outward action should express, is not naturally thus inflexible: it drifts away from its old anchorages, and gets afloat upon new tides of thought; as experience deepens, existence ceases to be the same, and the proportions in which things lie within our affections are materially changed; as the ascent of time is made, life is seen from a higher point, and fresh fields of truth and duty spread before our view. Habit being conservative, faith and feeling being progressive, unless their mutual relation be constantly re-adjusted by meditation, they will cease to correspond, and become miserably divergent; our action will not be *true*, our thought will not be *real*; both will be weak and dead; both distrustful as a culprit; both relying on hollow credit, and empty of solid wealth; and our whole life, begun perhaps in the order of conscience, and moving on externally the same, may become a semblance and a cheat. Bare moral principle, unless holding of something more divine, has but an unsafe tenure of the wisdom and the strength of life.

And even when the right is clearly *seen*, meditation is needed to collect our powers to *do* it. It is the great store-house of our spiritual dynamics, where divine energies lie hid for any enterprise, and the hero is strengthened for his field. All great things are born

of silence. True, the fury of destructive passion may start up in the hot conflict of life, and go forth with tumultuous desolation. But all beneficent and creative power gathers itself together in silence, ere it issues out in might. Force itself indeed is naturally silent, and only makes itself heard, if at all, when it strikes upon obstructions to bear them away as it returns to equilibrium again. The very hurricane that roars over land and ocean, flits noiselessly through spaces where nothing meets it. The blessed sunshine says nothing, as it warms the vernal earth, tempts out the tender grass, and decks the field and forest in their glory. Silence came before creation, and the heavens were spread without a word. Christ was born at dead of night; and though there has been no power like his, 'He did not strive nor cry, neither was his voice heard in the streets.' Nowhere can you find any beautiful work, any noble design, any durable endeavour, that was not matured in long and patient silence, ere it spake out in its accomplishment. *There* it is that we accumulate the inward power which we distribute and spend in action; put the smallest duty before us in dignified and holy aspects; and reduce the severest hardships beneath the foot of our self-denial. *There* it is that the soul, enlarging all its dimensions at once, acquires a greater and more vigorous being, and gathers up its collective forces to bear down upon the piecemeal difficulties of life, and scatter them to dust. *There* alone can we enter into that spirit of self-abandonment, by which we take up the cross of duty, however heavy, and tread the dolorous way with feet however worn and bleeding. And thither shall we return again, only into higher peace and more triumphant power, when the labour is over and the victory won, and we are called by death into God's loftiest watch-tower of Contemplation.

XVIII.

WINTER WORSHIP.

JOHN V. 13.

AND HE THAT WAS HEALED WIST NOT WHO IT WAS.

If the first power of Christianity was embodied in miracle, it was in miracle so distinctly expressive of its spirit, and so analogous to its natural agency in the world, as to invite rather than repel our imitation. Whatever be meant by the two great praternatural endowments entrusted to its earliest missionaries,—the gift of tongues and the gift of healing,—they represent clearly enough the two grand functions of our religion,—to bear *persuasion to the minds*, and bring *mercy to the physical ills*, of men. On that summer morning in Jerusalem, when the men of Galilee stood forth within the temple courts to preach the first glad tidings to the strangers of Parthia, and Greece, and Rome, and with their speech reached the minds of that multitude of many tongues, what better symbol could there be of that religion, whose spirit is intelligible to all, because it addresses itself to the universal human heart, and speaks, not the artificial jargon of sects and nations, but the natural language of the affections, which are immortal. And when the crowd of weary

sufferers thronged around the Apostles' steps in the city, the blind supporting the lame, and the lame eyes to the blind ; or when the solitary leper saw them in the field, and made his gesture of entreaty from afar, and all were healed,—how better could be represented the character of that faith, which has never set eyes on pain without yielding it a tear ;—which, in proportion as it has been cordially embraced, has sickened the heart of scenes of suffering and blood, and lessened, age after age, the stripes wherewith humanity is stricken. We neither claim nor ask for the cloven tongues of a divine persuasion : we boast not of any arm of miracle which we can lay bare in conflict with disease and sorrow : but in the *spirit* of these acts of Providence we may participate. While fanatics vainly pretend to repeat their marvellousness, we may choose the better part, and copy their beneficence. The world needs the preachers of wonders, less than the apostles of charity.

And, whatever its accessories of miracle, nothing could be more unostentatious than the diffusion of Christ's mercy by its missionaries in the days of old. Beginning with the provinces of Palestine, it passed, from village to village of the interior, from city to city of the vast empire's various coast : along the shores of Asia, beneath the citadels of Greece, to the world's great palace on the Tiber, it stole along, fleet and silent as the wind that bloweth where it listeth, sweeping through many a foul recess, and leaving health where it found pestilence. Our imagination, corrupted by the pomp of history, dwells perhaps too much on the more brilliant positions and marked triumphs of the ancient gospel. We follow Paul through his vicissitudes, and feel an idle pride in his most conspicuous adventures:

and when he stretches forth the hand and speaks before King Agrippa; when idolaters mistake the bearer of a godlike message for a god, and bow before him, as to Mercury; when in Ephesus he becomes the rival of Diana, and ruins the craftsmen of the silver shrines; when philosophy listens to him on Areopagus, and the Furies still slumber within hearing in their grove,—we vainly think that he derives his greatest dignity from the scenes in the midst of which he stands, a contrast and a stranger. As we would deserve the Christian name, let us look more deeply into his mission, and adopt more fully the spirit of his mind. Watch him even in Rome, where he dwelt, though a prisoner, in his own hired house; and where shall we seek for him, in that dazzling metropolis? He was not one to pass through its scenes of magnificence with stupid and fanatic indifference, to find himself surrounded by the monuments of ancient freedom, and listen for the first time to the very language of the world's conquerors, without catching the inspiration of history, and feeling the solemn shadow of the past fall upon him. I do not say that he never paused beneath the senate-house to think of the voices that had been heard within its walls; or climbed the capitol, once the palace of the republic, now its shrine; or started at the fasces, stern emblem of a justice now no more; or went without excitement into the imperial presence through the very gardens where his own blood should hereafter be shed in merriment. But his daily walks passed all these splendours by: they dived into the lanes and suburbs on which no glory of history is shed, and which made Rome the sink and curse, while it was the ruler, of the nations: they found the haunts of the scorned Hebrew: they startled the degraded revels

of the slave : they sought out the poor foreigner, attracted by the city's wealth, and perishing amid its desolation : they crept to the pallet on which fever and poverty were stretched, tendering the hand of restoration, and whispering the lessons of peace. This was his noblest dignity : not that he publicly pleaded before princes, but that he secretly solaced the outcast and the friendless ; not that he paced the forum, but that he lingered in the dens of wretchedness, and refreshed the hardened heart with gentle sympathies, and linked the alien with the fraternity of men, and shed upon the darkest lot a repose on Providence and a light of hope. And what is true of this great apostle, is true of the religion which he spread, and which we profess. Its true dignity is, that unseen it has ever gone about doing good. Link after link has it struck from the chain of every human thralldom : error after error has it banished : pain after pain has it driven from body or from mind : and so silently has the blessing come, that (like the lame whom Peter made to walk) 'he that was healed wist not who it was.'

It can *never* be unseasonable for those that bear the name of Christ to imitate his spirit, and to address themselves to the great mission which Providence has assigned to their religion (that is, to themselves), as the antagonist power to those human sufferings, which may be lightened at least, if not remedied. But this period of the year* brings with it a distinct and peculiar call to remember with a thought of mercy the several ills that flesh is heir to. Every season has its appropriate worship, and demands an appropriate recognition : for each presents in some peculiar form the physical activity of nature, which is, in fact, the

* This Discourse was preached at the end of November.

immediate energy of God. If, in the picturesque spirit of ancient times, we had our annual festivals for remembering the several aspects of our lot, and bringing successively before the eye the many-coloured phases of human existence, we should cast lots among the days of spring for an anniversary of life and health, when earth is unburdening her heart to God, and framing from a thousand new-born melodies an anthem of brilliant praise. For the celebration of disease and death we should resort to the days of the declining year: and instead of leaping on the green sod and pouring forth the hymn of joy, we should kneel upon the rotting leaves and pray. However constant the visitations of sickness and bereavement, the fall of the year is most thickly strewn with the fall of human life. Everywhere the spirit of some sad power seems to direct the time: it hides from us the blue heavens; it makes the green wave turbid; it walks through the fields, and lays the damp, ungathered harvest low; it cries out in the night wind and the shrill hail; it steals the summer bloom from the infant cheek; it makes old age shiver to the heart; it goes to the churchyard, and chooses many a grave; it flies to the bell, and enjoins it when to toll. It is God that goes his yearly round; that gathers up the appointed lives; and, even where the hour is not come, engraves by pain and poverty many a sharp and solemn lesson on the heart.

How then shall we render the fitting worship of the season? We do so, when we think of these things in the *spirit of religion*; when we regard them in their relation to the great Will which produces them; when, instead of meeting them in the spirit of recklessness, or viewing in them the triumph of disorder, or shrink-

ing from them in imbecile fear, we recognize their position in a system of universal Providence, various in its means, but paternal in its spirit and beneficent in its ends; when 'none of these things move us,' except to a more reverential sense of mystery, and a serener depth of trust. In a season of mortality, it is surely impossible to forget the relations of other scenes to this; that departure from this life is birth into another; that the immortal rises where the mortal falls; that the farewell in the vale below is followed by greetings on the hills above; so that, if sympathy with mourners here permit, the sorrows of the bereaved on earth are the festival of the redeemed in heaven.

We render the appropriate worship of the season, when we think of the painful passages of human life, not merely as proceeding from God, but as incident to our own lot; not merely in the spirit of religion, but in that of *self-application*. It is difficult for the living and the vigorous to realize the idea of sickness and of death: and though within a few paces of our daily walks there are beings that lie in the last struggle, and some sufferer's moan escapes with every breath that flies, yet whenever pain fairly seizes our persons in his grasp, or enters and usurps our homes, we start as if he were a stranger. And perhaps it will be asked, 'Why should it be otherwise? Why forestall the inevitable day, and let the damp cloud of expectation fall on the illumined passages of life?' I grant that to remember the conditions of our existence with such result as this, to think of them in an abject and melancholy spirit, is no act of wisdom or of duty. I know of no obligation to live with an imagination ever haunted by mortality; to deem every enjoyment dangerous, lest it cheat the heart into a happy repose upon

the present, and every pursuit a snare, which fairly embarks the affections upon this world; to consider all things here devoid of any good purpose except to tempt us. The theory which crowds this life with trials, and the other with rewards, which brightens the future only by blackening the present, which supposes that the only proper office of our residence here is to keep up one prolonged meditation on the hereafter, is a mere burlesque of nature and the gospel. Futurity is not to mar, but to mend, our activity; and earth is not given that we may win the reversion of heaven, so much as heaven revealed to ennoble our tenure of earth. I know of no peculiar preparation for immortality beyond the faithful performance of the best functions of mortal life; and if it were not that these will be more wisely discharged, and the attendant blessings more truly felt, by those who remember the sadder conditions of our lot than by those who forget them, there would be no reason why they should ever appear before the thoughts. But they are *facts*, solemn and inevitable facts, which come with least crushing power on those who see them from afar, and become reconciled to them, and even fill them by forethought with peaceful suggestion. The sense of their possibility breaks through the superficial crust of life, and stirs up the deeper affections of our nature. It refines the sacredness of every human tie: it dignifies the claims of duty: it freshens the emotions of conscience: it gives promptitude to the efforts of sympathy; and elevates the whole attitude of life.

But, above all, we pay the fitting worship of the season, when we greet its peculiar ills in the *spirit of humanity*; when we think of them, not simply as they come from God, and may come to ourselves, but as

they actually do befall our neighbours and fellow-men. It were selfish to gather round our firesides, and circulate the laugh of cheerfulness and health, without a thought or deed of pity for the poor sufferers that struggle with the winter storms of nature or of life. Who can help looking at this season with a more considerate and reverential eye upon the old man, to think where he may be? Year after year he has been shaken by the December winds, but not yet shaken to his fall: deeper and deeper the returning frost has crept into his nature; and will it reach the life-stream now? You watch him as you would the last pendulous leaf of the forest, still held by some capricious fibre, that refuses perhaps to part with it to the storm, and then drops it slowly through the still air. You gaze at him as he stands before you, and wonder that you can ever do so without awe; for the visible margin of existence crumbles beneath him, and he slips into the unfathomable. And as the tempest wakes us on our pillow, it is but common justice to our human heart, to send out a thought over the cold and vexed sea in search of the poor mariner that buffets with the night, or perhaps sinks in that most lonely of deaths, between the black heavens that pelt him from above and the insatiable waste that swallows him below. Nor will generous and faithful souls forget the dingy cellar or the crowded hovel, where in a neighbouring street the fevered sufferer lies, and the ravings of delirium and the sport of children are heard together, or life is ebbing away in consumption, hurried to its close by the chill breath of poverty and winter. O could we but see the dread gripe of want and disease upon hundreds of this community at this moment, and hear the cries of hungry children and the moans of untended sickness,

the only difficulty would be, not to stimulate our generosity to do enough, but to persuade it to work out its good with patience and with wisdom !

And here indeed is a difficulty, which every considerate mind will feel to be grave, and even terrible. The multitude of miseries spread around us make humanity easy, a wise direction of its impulses, most difficult ; the very spectacle which gives to benevolence its intensity, throws it also into despair. The perplexity arises partly from the state of society in which we live ; from relations among its several classes altogether new, and rendering the ancient and traditional methods of doing good in a great degree inapplicable. A slave-owning or feudal community, by killing out from the great mass of men everything above the rank of hunger, reduces the office of compassion within a very narrow compass : and the dish from the rich man's table, or the garment from his wardrobe, sent as to the domestic animals of his estate, to stop their cries and soothe them to sleep, are the only boons that are required, or possibly that can be given without peril of social revolution. Happily, —yet not without much unhappiness too,—such revolution is now effected or in progress ; greatly through the influence of that Christianity, which pronounces all to be children of One who is ' no respecter of persons ;' and assures us that whenever we say ' Be thou warmed and filled,' it is no other than ' *a brother or sister*' that comes before us ' naked and destitute of daily food.' Our current notions of benevolence have descended to us from the recent times of feudalism : yet we are conscious that they do not come up to the higher demands which have arisen, or adapt themselves to the new intellectual and moral wants comprised in any Christian estimate of the poor of this world. The ease

of ancient condescension is gone : the graceful recognition of human brotherhood is not attained. To aim at making men like ourselves into creatures with enough to eat,—though a thing unrealized as yet,—is felt to be insufficient ; and how to raise them into the likeness of the children of God we cannot tell,—the very notion receiving at present but a timid acknowledgment. This, however, if we are in earnest, is but a temporary difficulty, attending on a state of hesitancy and transition. Let the mind fairly emancipate itself from that debasing valuation of a human being which the mere sentiments of property would dictate ;—trust itself, with high faith, to the equalizing spirit of Christian piety and hope ; and in paying, to all, the reverence due to an immortal, it will attain to the freedom and power of a divine love : it will speak to sorrow with the voice of another Christ, and restore his holiest miracles of mercy. Who can doubt that, were his spirit here, the work of good need not despair ?

But, for want of this spirit in perpetuity, another obstacle obstructs the course of bewildered charity. We form our good intentions too late : and while benevolence, to be successful, must work in the way of prevention and anticipation,—at the very least putting resolutely down each confused and hurtful thing as it appears,—men rarely bestir themselves till evils get ahead, and by no effort can well be overtaken. The physical, moral and religious condition of the poor, which in our days begins to excite so much attention, should have been studied thus half a century ago ; easy in comparison had it then been to prevent the ills which now we know not how to cure. We permit a generation to grow up neglected, with habits a grade *below their fathers* ; and then consider how they may

be reclaimed. We suffer a new manufacture to start into existence, and seize, with the hands of a needy giant, on infant labour: and when it has appropriated a generation to itself, and boldly insists on its prescriptive right to be fed for ever from the same life-blood of our humanity, we look round on the degenerate bodies and stunted minds of an enormous population, and begin to cry out for an efficient public education, against which the immediate physical interests of poor as well as rich are now combined. The Providence of God is retributory: and too often it happens that the sinful negligence of one age cannot be repaired by the penitent benevolence of many: the unpaid debt accumulates its interest, till discharge becomes impossible: misery grows impatient and clamorous; and repays at length in fury the injuries inflicted by ancient wantonness and neglect. Neither in communities, nor in individuals, does God give encouragement to death-bed repentance: and societies that trust to it shall find themselves, after short delay, under the lash of demons and near the seat of Hell. Let them be timely wise, and maintain the vigils of benevolence, while the accepted hour remains.

Amid all controversies respecting the quarter from which the assault on the evils of indigence is best commenced, whether the physical wants should be remedied through the moral, or the moral through the physical, whether most is to be hoped for from legislative measures, or from individual efforts, one principle may be regarded as certain, and, considering the tendencies of our age, not unseasonable. You cannot mechanize benevolence: you cannot put Christian love into an act of Parliament or a subscription list: and however necessary may be the remedial action of laws

and institutions, on account of the comprehensive scale of their operation; the ties between man and man can be drawn closer only by personal agency. Not one new sympathy can arise but by the contact between mind and mind: in the spiritual world life is born only of life: nor is any abrogation possible of that law of God which requires that we *seek* whatever we would *save*. The good comfort which with willing soul we tender to each other is of all things most precious to the heart. As the blow of calamity falls with three-fold weight when it descends from the injustice of men, so the deliverance brought by their pity and affection is a blessing infinitely multiplied. The one poisons and prevents our submission, as to a will of God; the other sweetens and elevates our gratitude to him; the one cancels, the other creates, what is most divine in the dispensation. Only so far as there is a 'charity' that 'never faileth' from the souls of men, can they live in communion together on this earth: and from Christendom every 'faith' shall be cast out as a dead heathenism, except such as 'worketh by love.'

XIX.

THE GREAT YEAR OF PROVIDENCE.

2 PETER III. 4.

WHERE IS THE PROMISE OF HIS COMING? FOR, SINCE THE FATHERS WERE ASLEEP, ALL THINGS CONTINUE AS THEY WERE FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION.

CHRIST quitted the world in benediction, and left upon it a legacy of inextinguishable hope. The first manifestation of the hopeful spirit of his religion was in the expectation, confidently held by the Apostles and their followers, that within 'that generation' he would return from heaven in triumph, gather together a faithful community, exterminate the ills of human life, and become monarch over a renovated and immortal world. Sufferers of every class (and the church had mercy for them all) laid this hope to heart, and stood silent beneath scorn and persecution, believing that the lashes of oppression were numbered now. As the years passed on, and the outer limits of the generation were approached, the flush of expectation became more intense. One after another the Apostles dropped off, without witnessing the desire of their eyes; till at last the protracted life of John became the solitary and fragile thread on which this splendid anticipation hung. He too died, and Jesus had not returned: and the

church, unwilling to confess its disappointment, extended the term of hope by a liberal construction of the promise. Here and there among the communities of disciples there lingered a few aged men, whose life reached back to the years of Christ's ministry: and till they were gone, it was not too late for the Son of Man to come. Expectation became more anxious and feverish every year: passing events were perverted into auguries of its impending realization: the rout of an army, the incursion of a new invader, the rumour of an earthquake, the blaze of a meteor by night, or a stroke or lightning upon a Pagan shrine, was caught at with breathless eagerness, and watched as a herald to the last act of human things. But as storm after storm passed off and brought no change; as life after life disappeared, and even rumour could find nowhere a surviving representative of Christ's generation, hope faded into doubt; and despair broke loose and cried, 'Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' No brilliant exultation longer cheered the woes of the church and of the world: they fell back again with their dull weight upon the heart. The Christian mother wept now for her martyred son, whom, in the thought of instant restoration, she had forgot to mourn: the despised teacher began to cower before the Heathen's or the Hebrew's scorn, which he knew no longer how to answer: and the irons of the Christian field-slave, to which for years his faith had given a farewell look each night before he slept, grew heavy on his limbs again.

Almost eighteen hundred years separate us from the *disappointment* of this singular expectation; and the

calmness with which we can look back on a scene so distant, enables us to draw from it a sacred lesson of Providence. Well might God rebuke and disappoint this affectionate but erring hope: for what did it assume?—That a few years' preaching of a pure religion and the forcible enthronement upon earth of one who had lived in heaven, were all that was necessary for perfecting the world, for driving sin and sorrow from the hearts and homes of men, and giving life its final sanctity. How imperfect was the estimate of this regenerative work, which could assign it to instruments so inadequate, and a process so brief! God has taught us now, that a moral change so various and stupendous, implying the civilization of barbarism, the illumination of the ignorant, the rescue of the oppressed, the pacification of nations, the multiplication of Christ's own spirit of humanity over the globe, is not to be wrought in an hour by Omnipotence itself; is beyond the reach of any mechanical scheme of rule, though conducted by beings of another world; and must wait on the silent operation of those spiritual laws of the human mind which neither the individual nor the race can be permitted to outstrip. We look back over the centuries by which we have retired from the fountains of our faith, and learn how solemn is the task of God's Providence on earth; for he labours at it still; and though its progress has been visible to this hour, it seems but starting on its cycle yet.

Who will not confess a strong sympathy with the early Christians' delight, in anticipating certain great and divine revolutions within their own generation? That human life is too short to witness the fruits of its own efforts, that it scatters in seed-time, but may not put the sickle to its own harvest, that its whole

career from infancy to age scarce measures a solitary step in the march of humanity, has always been felt to be an arrangement hard to bear. And there is a peculiar fascination in the thought of personally experiencing the realization of one's social dreams, of quickening a too tardy Providence to the pace of our fleeting years, and finding the race of man give promise of perfection during our mortal instead of our immortal lives. It is the severest and sublimest duty of philanthropy to toil in faith and die in tears; to grapple with ills that must survive it, and may destroy; to remonstrate with oppression, and only see its gripe tightened on its victim in revenge. The mistake of the early church is not theirs alone: it is a human, rather than a theological, error. All men have the prime element of such a superstition in themselves; an impatience at the slow step of advancement, an eagerness for some visible and palpable progress in everything which is thought capable of indefinite improvement. Such 'delusion' is the only way in which the human soul can enter into God's 'everlasting now.' Yet, while really springing from a noble faith, it produces, in its reaction, many an ignoble doubt. This disposition looks, for example, at the individual mind; and seeing it become stationary, the dull slave of habit, declares that it cannot be immortal. Or it contemplates the general community of men; and imagining its state little superior to some former condition of the world, denies it the hope of unlimited amelioration. This spirit of despondency is especially liable to visit us, when we stand at one of the pauses of our time,—at the end of a season, of a year, of a life,—of any unit that has had a predecessor, and will have a successor, just like *itself*: still more perhaps, when we review the progress

(ever small compared with our desires) of some benevolent work,* to which, from its magnitude and character, we can see no definite termination. The retrospect of a few years often seems to exhibit to us a sameness the most depressing; to show us how little we have done; to persuade us that,—as if in rebuke of our hopes,—‘all things continue as they were,’ and no advent of a better life is heralded as yet. The same evils which met our eye and our pity of old, encounter us this day: and if in any instance they have been cancelled, others, not less frightful, seem ever ready to rush up into their place: so that, in turning to the future, no visible end appears to the saddening task of Christian mercy. Under the influence of this thought, the mind is haunted and harassed by the image of all things circulating; whirling in mysterious self-repetition; looking in upon us with the fixed full eye of an ancient fatalism. And we are deluded into the fear that nothing is ever to be better; that our faith in the progress of our religion and our kind must be dragged into the vortex of a wearisome periodicity, and expire in the exclamation, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’

This distressing impression might be relieved, if we could only discriminate, by any rule, between those series of events which are periodical, and those which are eternal;—between those changes in the moral world which visibly complete themselves, and those which at least *may* be interminable. Change of some kind is the law of the universe: everything which God does is progressive: and the present question is,

* This Discourse was preached in behalf of the London Domestic Mission, April, 1841.

whether any of his progressions having reference to human beings appear to run on into infinitude ?

Now in seeking for an answer to this question, we are encountered by an apparent law of the organized, or at all events of the sentient creation, of a truly remarkable character ;—a law which, though discernible only in fragments and interrupted by seeming exceptions, holds with sufficient consistency to disclose the general method of nature ;—viz., that in proportion to the excellence and dignity of any form of existence, is it long in coming to maturity ; that the cycles of things are great, in proportion to their worth. It is needless to say that there is no other criterion of the worth of a being than the magnitude of its capacities, and the number of its functions.

In glancing our eye up the chain of animal races, however difficult it may be to arrange them symmetrically in an ascending series, the outlines of this law are surely sufficiently obvious. The creatures which, by universal consent, would be placed at the lower end of the scale, seem to come into life perfect at once, or, if they grow, to grow only in quantity : as if of an existence so inferior no part could be spared as preface to the rest. The perfect formation of creatures of a superior order divides itself into several distinguishable stages : and the greater the number of faculties and instincts, the longer is the period set apart for the process of development. The lion has a longer infancy than the sheep, and the sagacious elephant than either. The human being, lord of this lower world, is conducted to this supremacy through a yet more protracted ascent : none of the creatures that he rules have an infancy so helpless or so lasting : none furnish themselves so slowly with the knowledge needful for self-

subsistence :—as if to him time were no object, and no elaboration of growth were too great for his futurity.

Compare also the different faculties and feelings of the individual human mind. You find them appear in the order of their excellence ; the noblest approaching their maturity the last. Sensation, which belongs to man in common with all other sentient beings, is the endowment of his earliest days. Memory, which simply prevents experience from perishing, which furnishes language to the lips, and preserves the materials of the past for future treatment by the mind, ripens next. The understanding, which makes incursions and wins trophies in the field of abstract truth, which devises measures for the dimensions of space and the successions of time and the great physical movements that circulate within them, is of later origin : while the great inventive power which distinguishes all genius, which seems to sympathize with the devising spirit of the Artificer of things, and apprehend by natural affinity the most subtle relations he has established, and anticipate by mysterious intimacy the future secrets of nature, and from old and gross ingredients create the useful, the beautiful, the true, is the last as it is the rarest and most glorious of intellectual gifts. And the moral powers,—so far as they can be regarded separately from these,—are seen and felt expanding later still. The true appreciation of action and character, the faithful and impartial love of whatever things are pure and good, the correct and profound estimate of life, the serenest spirit of duty and of faith, are scarcely found till most of the lessons of our mortal state have been read, and the soul has caught some snatches of inspiration from the ‘still sad music of humanity.’ We may even say, that perhaps not all our faculties develop

themselves here; and whole classes of emotions and conceptions may wait to be born beneath other influences. Certain at least it is, that one who dies in infancy can have little idea of anything beyond sensation; that one who falls in childhood cannot know the toils and triumphs of the pure reason; that one who dies in youth has not yet learned the sense of power which belongs to the practised exercise of creative thought, and the sacred peace of disinterested duty long tried in trembling and in tears. Certain too it is, that to the open mind fresh gleams enter to the last; strange stirrings of diviner sympathies; waves of thin transparent light flitting through the spaces of the aged mind, like the Aurora of the North across the wintry sky. Even therefore when 'maturity' has been passed, we may die, peradventure, ignorant of the secret fountains of illumination that may be sequestered in the recesses of our nature: and when we depart at three-score years and ten, our experience may be as truly imperfect,—as much a mere fragment,—as when we lapse in a mortality falsely called 'premature.'

From the individual mind turn to the successive developments of society at large; and the same law is perceptible still; that the superior attributes are of the longest growth. The most rapid of social changes is found in the progress of material civilization; and certainly it is the least dignified element in the general advancement, though essential to the rest. Of the rapidity with which a new art may be perfected, new channels of commerce filled, a new manufacture start into gigantic existence, no age or country affords more striking instances than our own. Let gain supply the adequate motive; and a few years suffice to reclaim the wilderness, and make the harvest wave where before the

forest rose ; or to cover the soil with cities, dusy with congregated labour ; or to enliven the sea with traffic, where none had disturbed its solitudes before. How much longer does it require to penetrate the mass of a community with knowledge ; to fill a land with intelligence, than to throng it with life ! Even in the long lives of nations, few have arrived at that season, when the demand for general instruction naturally appears, and the truth goes forth, that the people are not a herd of mere animals or instruments of mere wealth, but beings of rational nature, who have a right to their powers of thought : and even where this demand has arisen, scarce a people yet has lived long enough to answer it. The morality of a community cannot be matured till its intelligence is unfolded : in societies, as in individuals, character cannot set, till reason has blossomed. The pure tastes of virtue cannot be looked for in those who have never been led beyond their senses ; nor even a wise self-interest be expected, where no habits of foresight have been acquired, and the intellect has not been taught to respect the future. I do not even suppose that the moral amelioration of a country immediately follows on the ‘diffusion of knowledge.’ On the spread of *education* it may : but it must be an education which comprises a principle of sympathy as well as of instruction ; which has a discipline for the heart as well as for the understanding ; which remembers the composite structure of our nature, and applies knowledge to no more than its proper office of enlightening the reason, and summons up *feelings* of right as the fit antagonists to passions that tend to wrong. But slower still than this is the religious civilization of a country : so that the history of a religion is usually a much longer and vaster one than the history

of any people ; a faith embracing many nations, but no nation many faiths. The most sacred ideas attach themselves with the greatest tenacity to the mind ; entwine themselves with the principles of action and forms of the affections ; and being most distrustful of change, are most tardy of improvement. The history of the past confirms these positions. Those countries whose progress has been the noblest and most durable, have attained their eminence by slow and imperceptible steps. And, on the other hand, the oriental tribes that have rushed into sudden splendour, have either stopped with the material or at best the intellectual form of greatness, without rising into the moral and spiritual : or else, their religion, resting on no adequate substrata of the lower ingredients of civilization, wanted an element of stability ; manifesting the nomadic strength for conquest and weakness for repose ; and becoming enervated by the arts and opulence and science which it first called into existence, and then could not command.

Wherever we look then,—to the chain of animal existence, to the faculties of the individual mind, or the stages of collective society,—we discover distinct traces of the same general law ; that in proportion to the excellence of any form of being, is its progress tardy and its cycle vast. Contract the limits of any nature, and its changes become quick and visible : enlarge them, and its vibrations become slow and majestic. On the surface of a pool, the wind raises rapid billows that would agitate an insect ; on the ocean, mighty oscillations that give a frigate time to think. ‘Like tide there is in the affairs of men :’ and if we think nobly of the great element on which it rides, if we take humanity to be no foul and shallow marsh, but a bound-

less and unfathomable deep, we shall not marvel that our little life scarce feels its deliberate and solemn sweep. Why, even in physical nature, the more complex and extensive any system of bodies is, the longer is the period of its revolution, and the less perceptible its velocity as a whole. Our single earth, revolving round the sun, soon comes to the point from which it started: add the moon to it, and the three orbs demand a greatly increased duration to return to the same relative position: collect the planets into a group, and their cycle of return when every perturbation shall have had its revolution, and they shall look at each other as they did at first, becomes immense, and, in our poor conceptions, almost coincides with eternity itself: and the solar system, as a whole, is travelling on all the while, astronomers assure us, towards the constellation Hercules. Such are the natural periods of the moral world, in proportion to the grandeur of its parts and relations; such, the tendencies of man and society, considered as a complex whole: however insensible the parallax of their progression, they doubtless gravitate incessantly to some distant constellation in the universe of brilliant possibilities,—to some space in the future where dwell and move forms of power and of good which it is no fable to believe gigantic and godlike.

In proportion then as we think well of our nature and of our kind; in proportion as we estimate worthily the task of Providence in ripening a world of souls, shall we be reconciled to the tardy and interrupted steps by which the work proceeds. We shall be content and trustful, though our personal portion of the work, and even the sum of our combined endeavours while we live, should be inconspicuously small. Have you

resolved, as much as in you lies, to lessen the number of those who, in this metropolis of the charities, have none to help them, or lift them from the darkness wherein they exist and perish unseen? It is good. Only remember, that if the ministry, which thus dives into the recesses of human wretchedness, and carries a healing pity to the body and the soul, which speaks to tempted, fallen, stricken men, from a heart that feels their struggle terrible, yet believes the conquest possible, be really right and Christian, then its slowness is but the attendant and symptom of its worth: and to despond because a few years' labour exhibits no large and deep impression made on the wickedness and miseries of this great city, would be to slight the work and forget its dignity. When London, mother of mighty things, after the travail of centuries, brings forth woes, how can they be other than giant woes, which no faint hope, no puny courage, but only the enterprise of high faith, can manacle and lay low? Surely it is an unworthy proposal which we sometimes hear respecting this and other deputed ministries of good, 'Well, it is a doubtful experiment, but let us try it for a few years.' If, indeed, this means that, in case of too small a measure of success, we are to do something more and greater; that we must be content with no niggardly and unproductive operation, but recognize in scanty results a call to stronger efforts; that, failing a delegated ministry, we will go forth ourselves into the places of want and sin, and make aggression on them with a mercy that can wait no more;—in *this* sense, let the mission pass for a temporary trial. But if it be meant that, disappointed in our hopes, we are to give up all and *do nothing*; that, having once set plainly before our face the beseeching looks of wounded

and bleeding humanity stretched upon our path, we are to 'pass by on the other side,' thinking it enough to have 'come and seen where it was,'—then I must say that any work, undertaken in this spirit, *has* failed already. For my own part, I should say that were we even to make *no* visible progress, were we able to beat back the ills with which we contend by not one hair's breadth;—nay, were they to be seen actually advancing on us, still no retreat, but only the more strenuous aggression, would be admissible. For what purpose can any Christian say that he is here in life, with his divine intimation of what *ought to be*, and his sorrowing perception of what *is*, if not to put forth a perpetual endeavour against the downward gravitation of his own and others' nature? And if in the conquest of evil God can engage himself eternally, is it not a small thing for us to yield up to the struggle our three-score years and ten? Whatever difficulties may baffle us, whatever defeat await us, it is our business to live with resistance in our will, and die with protest on our lips, and make our whole existence, not only in desire and prayer, but in resolve, in speech, in act, a remonstrance against whatever hurts and destroys in all the earth. Did we give heed to the counsels of passiveness and despondency, our Christendom, faithless to the trust consigned to it by Heaven, must perish by the forces to which it has succumbed. For, between the Christian faith, teaching the Fatherhood of God and the Immortality of men,—between this and the degradation of large portions of the human family, there is an irreconcilable variance, an internecine war, to be interrupted by no parley, and mitigated by no quarter: and if faith gives up its aggression upon the evil, the evil must destroy the faith. If the world were all a slave-

market or a gin-palace, what possible place could such a thing as the Christian religion find therein? Who, amid a carnival of sin, could believe in any deathless sanctity? or, through the steams of a besotted earth, discern the pure light of an overarching heaven? or, through the moans and dumb anguish of a race, send up a hymn of praise to the All-merciful? And are there not thousands already, so environed and shut in, that *their world is* little else than this? In proportion as this number is permitted to increase, does Christianity lose its evidence and become impossible. Sensualism and sin cannot abide the clear angelic look of Christian faith; but if once that serene eye becomes confused and droops abashed, the foe starts up in demoniac triumph, and proclaims man to be a brute, and earth a grave.

As we love then the religion by which we live, let us give no heed to doubt and fear. In the spirit of hope and firm endeavour let us go forward with the work we have begun; undismayed by difficulties which God permits us to hold in check, but not to vanquish; and stipulating for no rewards of large success as the conditions of our constancy of service. Our reliance for good results, and our consolation under their postponement, is in the essentially religious elements of this ministry: were its methods purely economic, addressing themselves exclusively to the bodily wants of its objects; or intellectual, working at their self-interest and self-will,—I for one should despair of any return worthy of much patience. But going forth as we do with that divine and penetrative religion, to whose subduing energy so many centuries and nations have borne their testimony, and continuing only that evangelizing process, before which so much wretchedness



and guilt have already yielded, we take our appointed place in the long history of Christianity, and attempt a work for which, like Providence, we can afford to wait. It is human, indeed, to desire some rich success ; and each generation expects to gather and taste the produce of its own toil : but the seasons of God are eternal ; he 'giveth the increase,' not for enjoyment only, but for reproduction ; and ripens secretly, beneath the thick foliage of events, many a fruit of our moral tillage, for the sake of the little unnoticed seed, which, dropped on the soil of his Providence, shall spread over a future age the shelter of some tree of life. Be it ours in word to proclaim, in deed to make ready, the 'acceptable year of the Lord.'

XX.

CHRIST AND THE LITTLE CHILD.

LUKE XVIII. 17.

VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, WHOSOEVER SHALL NOT RECEIVE THE KINGDOM
OF GOD AS A LITTLE CHILD, SHALL IN NO WISE ENTER THEREIN.

By the Kingdom of God was meant neither the future state of the righteous, nor the dominion of Christianity in the world; but the personal reign of Messiah over a favoured and faithful people, on a renovated earth. The prospect of this period was, however, to the people of Palestine, nearly what the hope of heaven is to the Christian:—it embodied all their ideas of divine privilege and happiness, and, coinciding with their conception of religious existence, became their great symbol, by which to express the most blessed system of relations between the human mind and God. Into this system they esteemed it their birth-right to enter: the title and prerogative were in their blood,—the blood of patriarchs whom they had ceased to resemble, and of prophets of whose spirit they had none. At the gate of the kingdom they looked with no meek and far-off desire; they knelt and knocked with no suppliant air, breathing such confessions of unworthiness as give security for gratitude; but turned on it the greedy

eye of property, and rushed to it with intent to 'do what they liked with their own,'—so that 'the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and the violent would take it by force.' Scarcely were they content with the notion of admission as its subjects; they must be its lords and administrators too. For them, thought the Pharisees, were its dignities and splendours created, for them its patronage reserved; and the glorious sovereignty of God was to be not *over* them, but *by* them: so that, in every proffer of their services to Him, they contemplated, not the humility of submission, but the pride of command. Before such it was that Jesus held in his arms a child, gazing on his face, no doubt, in wonder, not without a pleased look of trust, and said, 'Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein.'

The occasion was slight and transient; the sentiment is profound and universal. In no other way could our Lord have made the irreligion of the Pharisees' temper more obvious, because nowhere could he have found a more genuine emblem of the pure religious spirit, than in a child. Not, as will hereafter appear, because a child's heart is peculiarly devotional; nor because the moral qualities of early life possess the romantic purity and perfection sometimes ascribed to them; much less because maturity affords a less fitting scope for the exercise of a holy mind: but because the relations of infancy resemble the religious relations; the natural conditions of its existence are the same that are felt by the devout heart; and hence, without any singularity of merit, the spirit of childhood, acquired by simple accommodation to the law of its being, is a just representative of the temper which devotion imparts to the mature. Let us trace some of the analo-

gies between the spirit of childhood and the spirit of religion.

Religion, it is obvious, can have place only in created and dependent minds. God cannot be devout: and though we have a term, viz. '*holy*,' applicable, as an epithet of moral description, to him in common with good men, the word, singularly enough, expresses, in reference to the human mind, precisely the only quality which cannot possibly attach to the Divine;—'*a holy man*' meaning one whose excellence has a religious root,—'*a holy God*' denoting the only being in the spiritual universe, whose perfections are unsusceptible of the colours of religious emotion. He who has no higher than himself must be stranger to the unspeakable reverence that gazes upwards on a goodness not its own: he who is himself the measure of all that is divine is unconscious of the presence of a yet diviner: and though we cannot speak of his moral attributes, without implying that he respects and loves the right, yet his venerating regards must look for this great idea, not *forth*, as on some outward being who furnishes the conception, but *within*, where alone is the Infinitude that befits the Infinite.

Yet it is not strictly Deity alone whose nature may exclude the possibilities of religion. This peculiarity may arise without our seeking it at that supreme height. A mind possessed, not of literal Omniscience, but of power simply equal to its conceptions, a mind absolute within its own realm, and limited only by its desires, would be incapable of veneration, because unconscious of a superior: and though he might really live in a narrow ring environed by the immeasurable deep of things,—so long as he mistook its circle for the total universe, he would feel, not as dependent, but as God,

—Lord of his little island in the sea of things, and ignorant of all beyond. Not till we are embraced by some necessity, and see its limits closing us in, can the opportunity and spirit of religion begin. So long as self-will is the sole law, and sits upon its throne, surrounded by obedient servitors, and in unresisted practice of command, the relations from which piety springs do not subsist. The exercise of power will not induce the idea of obligation, or the temper of submission. It is when we are struck down by some blow that extorts the cry of dependence, when we feel the pressure of foreign forces like a weight of darkness on us, when within us moves the strife that ends sometimes in the triumphs of success, sometimes in the collapse of weakness, that the heart acknowledges a relation to that which is above, as well as to that which is beneath. And even then, though submission is clearly inevitable, not so are the sentiments of religion: for there is still a question, submit *with hate*, or submit *with love*? And it is the blessed peculiarity of devotion, that it abdicates self-will, not sullenly, but with joy, has no enmity to the power that restrains it, but a reverence deep and tender, so that to feel the controlling presence becomes the prime condition of its peace, and to be stricken of God and afflicted is better than to be left to itself, and be at peace. ‘Let me alone, and torment me not,’ is the cry of discontent: ‘break me in sorrow, but depart not from me,’ is the prayer of piety. Such a suppliant has found the force of compulsion turned into the law of duty; and, inverting its direction, instead of crushing to the earth, it lifts him to the skies: if once he said with deep reluctance, ‘*I must, therefore I will,*’ he has now fused a divine element into that bitter word, and finds it a glad thing

to say, '*I ought*, therefore I will.' *Ought* is the heavenly reading for '*must*.' From the iron sceptre of necessity he has forged a weapon of ethereal temper; wherewith may be won victories more sublime than all the achievements of physical omnipotence.

Self-will then, so far as it operates, excludes the sentiments of religion; while it is of their very essence to live reverently and happily under a law not always coinciding with self-will. It is this which presents us with the first analogy between the spirit of childhood and the spirit of religion.

What indeed can be a truer picture of man in creation, than the position of a child in its own home? How silently, yet how surely, does the domestic rule control him, dating his rising and his rest, his going out and coming in, apportioning his duties and his mirth, ordering secretly the very current of his thoughts, whether it sparkle with gladness, or overflow with tears! Yet how rarely has he any painful sense of the constraining force which is every moment on him! Hemmed in on every side by a power more vigilant than the most jealous despotism, yet look at his open brow, and say, whether creature ever was more free? And why? Not certainly because childish minds are destitute of self-will that would seduce them into transgression; but because, where reverence and love make melody in the heart, the tempter is charmed and sleeps. Light therefore as the weight of the circumambient atmosphere upon the body, is the pressure of home duty upon the child; easy by the constancy and completeness with which it shuts him in; inseparable from the vital elements of his being. His life is an exchange of obedience for protection: he gives submission, and is sheltered. Folded in the

arms of an unspeakable affection, he is screened from the anxieties of self-care: not yet is he left alone upon the infinite plain of existence, to choose a path by the dim, sad lustre of his own wisdom, but is led gently on by the unextinguished lamp of a father's experience, and the meek starlight of a mother's love. In strangeness and danger, how close he keeps to the hand that leads him! In doubt, how he looks up to interpret the eye that speaks to him! In loss and loneliness, with what cries and tears he sits down to lament his freedom! He asks, but claims nothing; his momentary frowardness is stilled perhaps by a mere word; and, if not, yet his spontaneous return, after an interval, to his accustomed ways, confesses that in the order of obedience is the truest liberty.

In a like free and natural movement within the limits of a higher law, in like obedience refreshing because reverential, in like consciousness of a wiser and holier presence, from whom we withhold nothing, not even ourselves, consists the spirit of true piety: nor can any dwell on earth or in heaven, finding it a kingdom of God, but as the loving child dwells within his home. Unhappily, this temper is apt to be worn away by the hard attrition of maturer life. Our human relations are then reversed; we succeed, in natural course, to habits of command; the pride of power spoils us; the mental attitudes of reverence become uneasy; the eye bent unceasingly down on the petty realm of which we are lords, omits to look up on the infinite empire of which we are subjects. And thus might we become shut up in the dry crust of our self-will, if no embassage of suffering descended, and loosed the fountain of grief. Then the spirit of early years returns upon good hearts, and they become ashamed.

not of their new submission to the Great Parent, but of their long estrangement from his abode. A piety, like that of Christ, thus brings together the characteristic affections of different periods of life, and keeps fresh the beauty of them all: it puts us back to whatever is blessed in childhood, without abating one glory of our manhood; upon the embers of age it kindles once more the early fires of life, to send their genial glow through the evening chamber of the soul, and shine with playful and mellowed light through its darkened windows,—brightest sign of a cheerful home to the passer-by in storm and rain. By this restoration, let me repeat it, the religious mind loses no one glory of its manhood: it is not a substitution of passive meekness for active energy, of a devout effeminacy for natural vigour. For while the habit of successful rule, taking the lead, is apt to disqualify for submission, and render the mind restive under necessity, there is nothing in a deep reverence of soul which encroaches on the capacities for command. What was it that armed the Maid of Orleans for field and siege, and enabled her to erect again the prostrate courage of a nation? What was it that endowed a Washington with a power, in arms and peace, which no veterans could break, nor any rival supplant? It was this: that with them the exercise of command was itself the practice of obedience;—obedience to a high faith within the heart,—to a venerated idea of duty and of God; and authority, thus deprived of its imperiousness and its caprice, thus moderated to an inflexible justice, and worn with a divine simplicity, strikes into human observers an awe, a delight, a trust, which are themselves the highest fruits of power. When men perceive that their very *rulers* are susceptible of obedience, and are following

the guidance of reverential thoughts, it establishes a point of sympathy, and softens the hardships of submission. What parent knows not that then only are his orders listened to as oracles, when they are sent forth, not with the harsh clangor of self-will, but in the quiet tones that issue from behind the shrine of duty?

In the construction which I have given to the sentiment of Christ, it is not necessary to assume that the infant mind is peculiarly susceptible of religious impressions; or that, because it is taken as the emblem of the kingdom of heaven, it must on that account be laboriously and prematurely crowded with theological ideas: the issue of which would be, an artificial assumption of states of sentiment, and an affectation of desires, wholly unnatural and unreal, and absolutely incapable as yet of any deep root of sincerity. Except in circumstances of sickness or grief, which prematurely ripen the mind and make its wants anticipate its years, childhood has little need of a religion, in our sense of the word; for God has given it, in its very lot, a religion of its own, the sufficiency of which it were impiety to doubt. The child's veneration can scarcely climb to any loftier height than the soul of a wise and good parent:—well even, if he can distantly, and with wistful contemplation, scan even that. How can there be for him diviner truth than his father's knowledge, a more wondrous world than his father's experience, a better Providence than his mother's vigilance, a securer fidelity than in their united promise? Encompassed round by these, he rests as in the embrace of the only omniscience he can comprehend. Nor let this domestic faith suffer disturbance before its time. It is enough if he but sees the parents bend with silent awe, or hears them speak as if they were children too, before a

holier still : this will carry on the ideal gradation of ~~ascension~~, and show the firm deep where the steps ascend the skies. And then, when the time of free-will is ~~over~~, and youth is cast forth from its protection into the bewildering forces, now fierce and now seductive, of mid-life, religion comes in, as the just and natural ~~successor~~ to domestic influences ; shaping forth, for the heart's shelter in the wild immensity, the walls of an adamantine Providence, and spreading over the uncovered head the dome of immortality. O it is thus only that we mortals, in our maturity of energy and passion, can dwell on earth in purity and peace. By a polity of self-interest, and adjustments of promotion, and agencies of fear, we might no doubt have the world governed as a camp or a prison ; but by faith alone can we dwell in it as a home, and nestle domestically in our allotted portion of space and time. Taught by Christ, we glance at the visible creation, once so awful, so full of forces rushing we knew not whither, and involving us in their indomitable speed,—and it becomes the mansion of God's house, peaceful as a father's abode ; the sun that warms us is our domestic hearth ; and the blue canopy roofs us in with unspeakable protection. And as for life and its struggles, its stormiest conflicts are but the mimic battles, whereby the spiritual athlete trains himself for a higher theatre ; and if perchance, among the restless multitude that hurry over the scene, a neighbour should fall, shall I not help him, though it be his own demon passion that rends him ? O child of my Father, wounded, bleeding, and worn by inward woes, turn not thy face away ; let me lift thee from thy bed of rock, and stretch thee on the green sod of a pure affection ; for am I not thy brother, stricken in thy stripes, and healed in thy rest ?

This restoration to us of the filial feelings is the main illustrative point in our Lord's analogy between the spirit of piety and that of infancy. But there are other characteristics of childhood, which religion renders back to us, freshened and ennobled. To the child, the time before him seems to have no end. It is long before he essays to measure it at all; and when he does, it is only to prove it immeasurable. The next year is as a gigantic bridge that joins the two eternities; and as for all beyond, it is a land boundless, safe; verdant as the spring meadow, and flooded over with gladdest sunshine. The open graves lie hid among the grass; and the horizon shows not the little cloud, that shall bring up the overcasting of the heavens. Let a few years pass, and how does the vast field contract itself, and the stability of things seem shaken! The merry playmates, whose laugh still rings in our memory, by what storms have they been shattered; and now wander dispersed, like a shipwrecked crew, whose faithful hearts could keep together no longer against necessities so sharp! Before the middle of our natural career the wastes of vicissitude become deplorable: nor could any thoughtful man, if abandoned to physical impressions, feel the great mountain of life crumbling away beneath him, and see portion after portion dropping into the abyss on which it seems built, till but a film separates him too from the gulf, without the chill of an awe most sad. But this impression of a mournful brevity in our existence, the spirit of our faith corrects. To the life which had begun to appear like a process of continual loss, it adds another which is an everlasting gain; and we look again upon the future with eyes of childlike joy, seeing that, as our infant hearts had said, it *hath* no end, nor any grief that can endure. From

the cypress-tree beneath whose shadow we had placed ourselves to weep, we pass on with lightened step into the paradise of God, where is a rustling as of whispers of divinest peace, and hills, truly called eternal, close us round.

O blest beyond expression are they who, by this spirit of Christ, call back the freshness of their early years, and shed it over the wisdom of maturity; who, by attaching the great and transforming idea of God to everything, deprive the humblest existence of its monotony! who hear in the speech, and behold in the incidents, of every day, somewhat that is sacred! For them life has no satiety, disappointment no sting. They bear within them a penetrative power, which pierces beneath the earthy surface of things, and detects a meaning that is heavenly; enriching common sentiment with profound truth; lifting common duties from the conventional and the respectable into the holy and divine; and amid trials of the hour, giving dignity to that which else were humiliating and mean.



XXI.

THE CHRISTIANITY OF OLD AGE.

PHILEMON 9.

FOR LOVE'S SAKE I RATHER BESEECH THEE, BEING SUCH A ONE AS PAUL
THE AGED.

THE reverence for age is a striking and refreshing feature in the civilization of ancient and Pagan times. The frequent traces of it in the literature of Greece and Rome, compared with the silence of Christian precept on the subject, might be thought to indicate, that this sentiment owes no obligation to Christianity, and has a better home in the humanities of nature than in the suggestions of faith. The conclusion, however, would be wholly unwarrantable; and would never occur except to those who do not look beyond the letter into the spirit of a system, and who think to understand a religion by arithmetical reckoning of its maxims. Every system naturally strengthens most its weakest points. That Cicero wrote a treatise upon Age, and expended on it all the ingenuity of his philosophy, and the graces of his dialogue, proves that he regarded this department of morality with anxiety and apprehension: nor would Christianity have left the topic untouched, if its spirit and faith had not lifted this class of duties beyond the danger of neglect. A decline of tenderness

towards the aged,—mean or even melancholy sentiments with respect to their infirmities,—can never arise without scepticism of human immortality, and a total defection from the Christian mind.

The dignity of age, in the ancient world, was sustained by many considerations, of mingled expediency and affection, which retain with us but little force. Of how many honours has the printing-press alone deprived the hoary head! It has driven out the era, so genial to the old, of *spoken* wisdom, and threatens a reign of silence by putting all knowledge and experience into type. The patriarch of a community can never be restored to the kind of importance which he possessed in the elder societies of the world. He was his neighbour's *chronicler*; bearing within him the only extant image of many departed scenes and memorable deeds, and able to link the dim traditions of the past with the living incidents of the present. He was their most qualified *counsellor*; his memory serving as the archives of the state, and supplying many a passage of history illustrative of existing emergencies, and solving some civic perplexity. He was their *poet*; representative of an age already passed from the actual into the ideal; associate or contemporary of men whose names have become venerable; and in the oft-repeated tale of other days, from which time has expelled whatever was prosaic, weaving the retrospect of life into an Epic. He was their *priest*; loving to nurture wonder and spread the sense of mystery, by recounting the authentic prodigies of his own or his fathers' years, when omen and prophecy were no dubious things, but sober verities which Providence had not yet begrudged the still pious earth. From all these prerogatives he is now deposed, supplanted in his authority by the journal



and the library; whose speechless and impersonal lore coldly, but effectually, supplies the wants once served by the living voice of elders kindling with the inspiration of the past.

By far other and higher considerations does Christianity sustain reverential sentiments towards age. In the shape which they formerly assumed, they were the effects and marks of an imperfect intellectual civilization: surviving now, they are a part of the devout humanities diffused by the spirit of Christ. But for that spirit, every change which made the old less useful would have made them less revered. But the merely social and utilitarian estimate of human beings can never become prevalent, so long as faith in the immortal soul is genuine and sincere, and Jesus is permitted to teach in his own way the honour that is due to all men. To him did God give it to be the great foe of all scorn and negligence of heart; nor are there any tenants of life on whose lot he has shed a greater sanctity, than on those who are visibly on the verge of their departure. Let us observe for a few moments how Christianity teaches the world to look upon the aged.

Not, certainly, as its worn-out tools, who have done their work, and are fit only to be flung aside to rust amid worthless things. Not with sordid discontent, as on unwelcome and tedious guests, that they linger still to consume a hospitality which they will never repay, and keep possession of sources of enjoyment, on which more vivid appetites are impatient to enter. For wherever the slightest vestige of such feelings exists, there can be no remembrance of that higher field of service, of that nobler and more finished work, for which time, to its last beat, continues to prepare. So Epicurean a thought harbours in the low grounds of selfishness

and sense, and has never felt the pure breath of faith and reverence. Is there nothing which can drive us from this infatuation, and persuade us to look at a human being, not for what he *has*, but for what he *is*? Is he nothing then but a pensioner of Mammon, whose pittance is a pleasant sight for greedy eyes? Can we see him decline step by step to the brink of the dark abyss, till the ground crumbles beneath him and he slips in, and yet spend all our anxiety on the dropped cloak he has left behind?

Nor are the mere feelings of instinctive compassion towards weakness and helplessness those with which Christianity encourages us to look on age. For, these contemplate only its physical attributes; they virtually deny or overlook all its claims, except those of its animal infirmities; and show a mind forgetful of the capacities within, latent perhaps, but yet imperishable, that have toiled in a great work, and are on the threshold of a greater; that can know no eclipse but that of shame, nor any decrepitude but that of sin.

It has been imagined that religious faith does not like to draw attention to the decline which precedes, often by years, the approach of death; that the spectacle of a human being in ruins terrifies the expectation of futurity, and humbles the mind with mean suspicions of its destiny. Scepticism, which delights in all the ill-bodings which can be drawn from evil and decay, takes us to the corner where the old man sits; shows us the bent frame, and fallen cheeks, and closing avenues of sense; points to the palsied head, and compels us to listen to the drivelling speech, or perhaps the childish and pitiable cry; and then asks, whether *this* is the being so divinely gifted and so solemnly placed, sharer of the immortality of God, and

waiting to embark into infinitude? I answer,—assuredly *not*: neither in the wrecked frame, nor in the negation of mind, is there anything immortal: it is not this frail and shattered bark, visible to the eye, that is to be launched upon the shoreless sea. The mind within, which you do *not* show me, whose indications are for a time suppressed,—as they are in every fever that brings stupor and delirium, in every night even that brings sleep,—the mind, of whose high achievements, whose capacious thought, whose toils and triumphs of conscience and affection, living friends will reverently tell you,—the mind, which every moment of God's time for seventy years has been sedulous to build, and from which the deforming scaffold is about to fall away,—this alone is the principle for which we claim immortality. Say not that, because we cannot trace its operations, it is extinct: perhaps, while you speak, it may burst into a flame, and contradict you. For sometimes age is known to wake, and the soul to kindle, ere it departs; to perforate the shut gates of sense with sudden light, and gush with lustre to the eye, and love and reason to the speech; as if to make it evident, that death may be nativity; as if the traveller who had fallen asleep with the fatigues of the way, conscious that he drew near his journey's end, and warned by the happy note of arrival, looked out refreshed and eager through the morning air for the fields and streams of his new abode. And if any transient excitement near the close of life can, even occasionally, thus resuscitate the spirit; if some vehement stroke upon a chord of ancient sympathy can sometimes restore it in its strength, it is there still; and only waits that permanent rejuvenescence which its escape into the infinite may effect at once.

It is not a little difficult to understand, in what way these objectors would desire to improve the adjustments of life, in order to get rid of the grounds of their scepticism. Would they totally abolish the infirmities of years, and maintain the energy of youth unto the end? Then would there remain no apparent reason for removal or change: death would have looked tenfold more like extinction than it does now: and we should assuredly have reasoned, 'If the Divine Father, in his benignity, had intended us to persevere in life at all, he would have left us in peace in this dear old world.' As it is, there appears, after the decrepitude of age, an obvious need of some such mighty revolution as death: the mortality of such a body becomes a clear essential to the immortality of the soul: and our departure assumes the probable aspect of a simple migration of the mind,—a journey of refreshment,—a passage to new scenes of that infinite universe, to a mere speck of which, since we can discover its immensity, it seems unlikely that we should be confined.

Or is the demand of a different kind; not for immunity from bodily decline, but for an exemption of the soul from its effects? for faculties unconscious of the sinking frame,—dwelling in a tenement of whose changes they shall be independent? And what is this, when you reflect upon it, but to ask for a total separation of the material from the spiritual element of our nature,—for the very boon which we suppose to be obtained in death, a disembodied mind? For, a corporeal frame that did not affect the mental principle, would no more be any proper part of us, than the limbs of another man or the substance of the sun: its mere juxtaposition or coincidence in space with our *sentient* soul (even could such a thing be truly affirmed)

would not mix it up with our identity. Unless it were the interposed medium through which we communicated with the external world,—the appointed pathway of sensation ; unless, that is, we experienced vicissitudes of internal consciousness precisely corresponding to all its external changes,—we should have no interest in it, and it would have as little concern with our personality as the clothes or the elements in which we live. A hand that should leave us affected in the same way, whether it touched ice or fire ; a tongue that should recognize no difference between food and poison ; an eye that should convey to us the same impression through all its altering states,—would be unfitted for all its functions, and be a mere foreign encumbrance upon our life. That our organization reports instantly, —with a speed that no magnetic signal can surpass,—to the mind within ; that it works changes in our conscious principle precisely proportionate to its own, and affording a true measure of them,—is the very attribute which constitutes its exactitude and perfection. If then it were absurd to wish for limbs that could undergo exhaustion and laceration without our feeling them, and nerves that would give no knowledge of fever or inflammation, it would be no less irrational to desire a release of the mind from those infirmities of age, which are but a long fatigue,—life's final disease. All the lights of perception and emotion flow in upon us through the coloured glass of our organic frame ; and however perfect the power of mental vision may remain, if the windows be darkened, the radiance will be obscure.

And in the two most marked characteristics of old age,—the obtuseness of immediate perception, and the freshness of remote memories,—may we not even dis-

cern an obvious intimation of the great future, and a fitting preparative for its approach? The senses become callous and decline, verging gently to the extinction which awaits them, and in their darkness permitting the mild lustre of wisdom and of faith—if it be there—to shine forth and glow; and if not, to show in what a night the soul dwells without them. And that the mind should betake itself, ere it departs, with such exclusive attachment to the past, is surely suitable to its position. True, the enthusiastic devotion of an awed spectator, standing near to say farewell, naturally takes the opposite direction, and steals before the pilgrim to his home, and wonders that the old man's talk can linger so around things gone by. But is it not that already the thoughts fall into the order of judgment, and practise the incipient meditations of heaven? In that world of which we have no experience, we can at first have no anticipation: and in the place whither we go for retribution, we must begin with retrospect. All things and thoughts, all passions and pursuits, must live again: stricken memory cannot withhold them: there is a divination of conscience, at which their ghosts must rise, to haunt or bless us. And when the old man incessantly reverts to years that had receded into the far distance, and finds scenes that had appeared to vanish come back even from his boyhood and stand around him with præternatural distinctness, when ancient snatches of life's melodies thrill through his dreams, and the faces of early friends look in upon him often, the preparation is significant. He is gathering his witnesses together, making ready the theatre of trial, and collecting the audience for judgment. These are they that were with him in his manifold temptations, and can tell him of

his victory or his fall; that exercised such spirit of duty as was in him; whom his selfishness injured, or his fidelity blessed. Remembrance has broken the seals of its tombs; its sainted dead come forth at the trump of God within the soul, and declare the tribunal set.

With emotions then far different from the meanness of animal compassion, and the coldness of doubt, does the spirit of Christ teach the world to look on age. The veneration for it which our religion inspires, comes not from the past alone, but rather from the future. In *any* view indeed, the long-travelled and experienced mortal, in whose mind alone survive the pictures of many vanished scenes, and the landscape of time sleeps in true perspective, must be regarded with strong interest. If life were but a brief reality, that fleetly passed into a shadow and nothingness, the point of vanishing would not be without its solemn grandeur. But with how profound a reverence must we look on its last stage, as entering the margin of God's eternity; as the landmark of earth's boundary-ocean, fanned already by the winds, and feeling the spray, of the infinite!

Nor are the feelings less humanizing and holy with which Christianity teaches the aged disciple to regard the world and himself. He leaves it,—if he *be* a disciple,—not with censoriousness, but with faith; knowing that, with all its generations, the earth, as well as his own mind, is a thing young in the years of eternal Providence. He has too large a vision to be readily cast down about its prospects. If its social changes are not to his desire, if that for which he battled as for the true and good seems even to be retreating from his hopes, and questionable novelties to be deceiving the hearts of men,—yet he sinks without

despair, and waves, as he retires, a cheerful and affectionate adieu. He has too vivid a sense of the brevity of a human life, to despond at any vicissitudes that may occur, any tendencies that may disclose themselves, within such space. He freely blesses God, that when, from its altered ways, the world has become no longer congenial to him, he is permitted to leave it; and he can rejoice that those who remain behind behold it with different eyes: for he recognizes and admires God's law, that those who are to live in the world shall not be out of love with it. From the mental station which he occupies it certainly seems as if twilight were gathering fast and leading on the night: and so for two things he is thankful; that the *vesper*-bell flings its note upon his ear, and calls him to prayer and rest; and that on others of his race, who gaze into the heavens from a different point, the morning seems to be rising, and its fresh breeze to be up, and the *matin* rings its summons:—for always there must be prayer; only at dawn it leads to labour, and at eve to rest. Nor does he leave the world which has been his locality so long, as a scene in which he has no further interest. Possibly even, its future changes may not be hidden from his view: and at all events his sympathies dwell and will dwell there still: and all that most truly constitutes his being, the work he has done, the wills he has moved, the loving thoughts he has awakened, remain behind; enter the great structure of human existence, and share its perpetuity.

The aged, ere they depart, are able to report to us something of the exactitude of the Divine retribution. The justice of God does not always delay and postpone its sentence till it is inaudible to the living. There are

some of our human works that 'go before us to judgment;' and the verdict may be apprehended by every attentive mind. Our nature does not all die at the same moment; but the animal elements begin to vanish, while the moral still remain. And truly those in whom the lower self has been permitted to gain a terrible ascendancy, those whose life has been in obedience to the precept 'eat and be filled,' meet their dreary recompence in age: one part of their moral probation is visibly and awfully brought to its close; and in the miseries of a blank and chafing mind, a querulous imbecility of temper, a heart unrefreshed by a warm sympathy, every eye may discern the issue. But when the soul has been faithful to the higher purposes of existence; when there has been a benign observance of the moral relations which give dignity to life; when the sympathies of kindred and neighbourhood and society, the exercise of intelligent thought, the practice of unostentatious benevolence, the tranquil maintenance of faith and trust, have engaged and consecrated the years of best vigour,—there, even though the nobler fires of nature grow languid and decline, the mild light of a good heart shines to the last, cheerful to all observers, and casts no faint illumination on past and future. The peace of God full often survives the lapse of meaner comforts, and drives away every trace of fretfulness from age and terror from death; leaving simply the rest incident to the completion of a good and worthy fight; and preparing all hearts to hope for a quiet migration to a better country, even a heavenly. Calm as this, after a fiery career, was the retirement of 'such a one as Paul the Aged,' when 'the time of his departure was at hand.'

XXII.

NOTHING HUMAN EVER DIES.

ECCLESIASTES VII. 17.

WHY SHOULDST THOU DIE BEFORE THY TIME ?

THE only resource for a man without faith, is to be also without love ; which indeed, by the compassion of Heaven, he will naturally be. For scarcely can anything be more serious, than the aspect which life assumes, when any considerable portion of it lies in retrospect, beneath an affectionate eye that can discern no more than its visible and palpable relations. A few years of unconscious gain, followed by a long process of conscious loss, complete the story of our being here. The best shelter that the world affords us is the first,—the affections into which we are born, and which are too natural for us to know their worth, till they are disturbed ;—for constant blessings, like constant pressures, are the last to be discovered. During the whole period of childhood, when the most rapid and astonishing development of vitality and acquisition of power are going on, the wonder and the bliss are hidden from our eyes ; gratitude is scarcely possible ; and the delighted gaze of the contemplating spectator is unintelligible. We wake up at our first grave affliction ;

our blindness is removed by pain ; the film is purified by tears, and alas ! the moment sorrow gives us sight, the good that we behold is gone. And thenceforth we love knowingly, and lose constantly ; and after dreaming that all things were given to us, or were even by nature our own, we find them only lent, and see in our remaining years the undecyphered list of their recall. Standing on the shore which bounds the ocean of the Past, we see treasure after treasure receding in the distance, or thrown into that insatiable waste, on whose surface they make a momentary smile of light, then leave the gulf in darkness. Into that deep, year after year has sunk, no less rich than this* in spoils from the human heart. Our fathers and our early homes, the dream of our first friendships, the surprise of new affections, and all the delicious marvels of life yet fresh, have vanished there. And soon, when we have been the losers long enough, we shall become the lost ; and vainly struggle with the sweep of the unfathomable sea. Whether death, which treads closely on the steps of life upon our world, shall ever absolutely overtake it, and finally stop the race of beauty and of love, which now is perpetually begun afresh ;—whether the chills of winter, transient now, will become eternal, and suppress for ever the flowers which can yet steal out again on the bosom of the earth ;—whether the frosts of mortality shall hereafter arrest the life-stream of our race, and dismiss us to that extinction which has fallen on other tribes before us ;—and the clouds fly, and the shrill hail fall over a naked world,—we know not. But to us, in succession, all things die. The past contains all that time has rendered dear and familiar ; and *that* passes silently away : the future

* This Discourse was preached on the last day of the year.

contains whatever is cold and strange ; and its mysteries come swiftly on us.

Yet in this melancholy retrospect, natural as it is to our affections, there is a great deal of illusion, which is the occasion of half its sadness. When we go out of ourselves and our affairs, and seize a higher point of view, we see that this world is no such collection of perishable things, after all : that as God lives ever in it, he gathers around him all that is most like him, and suffers nothing that is excellent to die. There are things in his world which are not meant to perish ;—works which survive the workmen, and multiply blessings when they are gone, and which make all who lend a faithful hand to them, part of the husbandry of God, labourers with Him on that great field of time, whose culture and whose harvests are everlasting. The pains we spend upon our mortal selves, will perish with ourselves ; but the care we give out of a good heart to others, the efforts of disinterested duty, the deeds and thoughts of pure affection, are never lost : they are liable to no waste ; and are like a force that propagates itself for ever, changing its place but not losing its intensity. In short, there is a sense in which *nothing human ever perishes* : nothing, at least, which proceeds from the higher and characteristic part of a man's nature ; nothing which comes of his mind and conscience ; nothing which he does as a subject of God's moral law. His good and ill lives after him, an endless blessing or a lasting curse ; a consideration this which gives dignity to the humblest duty, and enormity to careless wrong. I do not now refer to the consequences of conduct in a future life ; but to a certain perpetual and indestructible influence it must have upon this world. It is a mistake to suppose that any service

rendered to mankind, any interesting relation of human life, any exhibition of moral greatness, even any peculiar condition of society, can ever be lost: their form only disappears; their value still remains, and their office is everlastingly performed. Material structures are dissolved, their identity and functions are gone. But mind partakes of the eternity of the great Parent Spirit; and thoughts, truths, emotions, once given to the world, are never past: they exist as truly, and perform their duty as actively, a thousand years after their origin, as on their day of birth. I would endeavour to illustrate this in some separate instances.

(1.) The acts of our individual minds are never lost.

Every human deed of right or wrong fulfils two offices: it produces certain immediate *extrinsic* results; and it contributes to form some *internal* disposition or affection. Every act of wise benevolence goes *forth*, and alleviates a suffering; it goes *within*, and gives intenser force to the spirit of mercy. Every act of vindictiveness goes *forth* and creates a woe; it goes *within*, and inflames the diseases of the passions. In the one relation, it may be momentary and transient; in the other, permanent and beyond arrest. In the one, its dealings are with pain and physical ill; in the other, with goodness or with guilt, and the solemn determinations of the human will. And inasmuch as physical ill is temporary, while moral agencies are eternal—(for death is the end of pain, but where is the end of sin?)—inasmuch as a disinterested and holy mind is the sure fountain of healing and of peace,—and a heart torn by passions fierce or foul is at once the seat and source of a thousand miseries,—no particular natural good or evil can be compared in importance with the eternal distinctions between right and wrong; nor any effect

of an action be ranked in magnitude with its influence on human affections and character. The great office of virtue (we are told) is to bless mankind : very well ; but then the greatest blessing is in the increase of virtue. The essential character therefore of every choice we make is to be found in its tendency to promote or to impair the purity and good order, the generosity and moral dignity, of the mind : and this element of our actions can never die ; but survives in our present selves, more truly than the juices of the soil in the leaves and blossoms of a tree. Such as we are, we are the offspring of the past ; ‘ the child is father to the man ; ’ our present characters are the result of all that we have desired and done ; every deed has contributed something to the structure, and exists there as literally as the stone in the pyramid on whose courses it was once laid. The action of the moral agent does not consist in the contraction of a muscle or the movement of a limb,—and this is all that is really transitory,—but in the dispositions of the mind, which are indelible. Our guilt as well as our goodness, once contracted, is ineffaceable. No power within the circuit of God’s providence can blot out an idea from the pages of the secret heart, or cancel a force of desire that has once gone forth. How vain then is the effort of thought to fly from the deed of sin, the moment it is finished,—the hurry of conscience to reach a place of greater peace,—the eager whisper of self-love that says, the lapse is over, and a firmer march of duty may be forthwith begun ! If the foul thing were cemented to the hour that witnessed its commission, you might escape it ; but being in the mind, you have it with you still, however fast you fly, and however little you look behind. Do you imagine that, the evil passion having spent its energy, you will be safer in its

weakness now? It is the falsest of all the sophistries of sin! A moral impulse, unlike a physical force, is not exhausted, but augmented, by every effort it puts forth; not only does it part with no portion of its power,—but it receives a fresh intensity. There still does it abide, more ready than ever to come forth and assert itself with strength. Every one's present mind is, in truth, the standing memorial, distinct and legible to the eye of God, of all that he has willed in time past: the conduct and feelings of to-day are the resultant of ten thousand forces of previous volition; nor would any act remain the same if any one of its predecessors were withdrawn or changed. Even the silent and hidden currents of desire and thought leave their traces visible; as waves in the deeper sea are discovered, when the waters ebb, by the ripple-mark congealed upon the sand. Thus the acts of our will do not and cannot perish: they then truly begin to live, when they are past; for then only do they become deposits in our memory, and contributions to our affections; then only does their internal and mental history commence, and they put forth that viewless attraction by which, more than before, the heart gravitates towards good or ill. There is consolation as well as terror in this thought. No strife of a good heart, no performance of a kind hand, has been without effect. Not in vain have been the struggles, however trivial they seem, of our early conscience, the dreams of a departed enthusiasm,—the high ambition of our untried virtue: these things are with us always, even unto the end: in our colder maturity, even in the frosts of age, their central glow is with our nature secretly, and relaxes unobserved the binding crust of years. Perishable deeds and transient emotions are the materials wherewith God has given

us to build up the eternal character; and to raise the tower by which we escape the floods of death, and, with no impious intent, climb the mansions of the skies. Steadily must the structure rise, like the walls of the persecuted Jerusalem of old, at which some toiled while others watched. Unceasingly we must build; parched, it may be, beneath the sultry sun, faint and sinking but for draughts from the 'wells of salvation;' on the side of the desert, it may be, where we should shudder at the tempest's moan, but for sweet songs of Zion that float to us from within;—exposed, it may be, to treacherous and banded foes, whose surprises would terrify, but for the trusty weapon and the well-trained arm;—at midnight and alone, it may be, cheerless but for the eyes of Heaven that look upon our toil, and the streaks of the East, which promise us a day-spring. Ye must build, over the valley and on the rock, till a wall of impregnable protection is thrown around the sanctuary within, and in securest peace ye can go in and out the temple of God's spirit;—'which temple ye are.'

(2.) The social and domestic relations whose loss we mourn do not really perish, when they seem to die.

Those relations, it is needless to say, do not consist in the mere juxtaposition of so many human beings. A certain number of animal lives, that are of prescribed ages, that eat and drink together, and that sleep under the same roof, by no means make a family. Almost as well might we say that it is the bricks of a house that make a home. There may be a home in the forest or the wilderness; and there may be a family, with all its blessings, though half its members be in foreign lands, or in another world. It is the gentle memories, the mutual thought, the desire to bless, the sympathies that meet when duties are apart, the fervour

of the parents' prayers, the persuasion of filial love, the sister's pride and the brother's benediction, that constitute the true elements of domestic life, and sanctify the dwellings of our birth. Abolish the sentiments which pervade and animate the machinery and movements of our social being, and their whole value obviously disappears. The objects of affection are nothing to us but for the affection which they excite; it is for this that they exist; this removed, their relation loses its identity; this preserved, it undergoes no essential change. Friends are assigned to us for the sake of friendship; and homes for the sake of love; and while they perform these offices in our hearts, in essence and in spirit they are with us still. The very tears we shed over their loss are proofs that they are not lost; for what is grief, but love itself restricted to acts of memory and longing for its other tasks,—imprisoned in the past, and striving vainly to be free? The cold hearts that never deeply mourn lose nothing, for they have no stake to lose: the genial souls that deem it no shame to weep, give evidence that they have, fresh and living still, the sympathies, to nurture which our human ties are closely drawn. God only lends us the objects of our affection; the affection itself he gives us in perpetuity. In this best sense, instances are not rare in which the friend or the parent then first begins to live for us, when death has withdrawn him from our eyes, and given him over exclusively to our hearts: at least I have known a mother among the sainted blest, sway the will of a thoughtful child far more than her living voice; brood with a kind of serene omnipresence over his affections and sanctify his passing thought by the mild vigilance of her pure and loving eye. And what better life for him could she

have than this? Nay, standing as each man does in the centre of a wide circumference of social influences, recipient as he is of innumerable impressions from the mighty human heart, his inward being may be justly said to consist far more in others' lives than in his own; without them and alone, he would have missed the greater part of the thoughts and emotions which make up his existence; and when he dies, he carries away their life rather than his own. He dwells still below, within their minds: their image in his soul (which perhaps is the best element of their being) passes away to the world incorruptible above.

(3.) All that is noble in the world's past history, and especially the minds of the great and good, are, in like manner, never lost.

The true records of mankind, the human annals of the earth, are not to be found in the changes of geographical names, in the shifting boundaries of dominion, in the travels and adventures of the baubles of royalty, or even in the undulations of the greater and lesser waves of population. We have learned nothing, till we have penetrated far beyond these casual and external changes, which are of interest only as the effect and symptoms of the great mental vicissitudes of our race. History is an account of the past experience of humanity; and this, like the life of the individual, consists in the ideas and sentiments, the deeds and passions, the truths and toils, the virtues and the guilt, of the mind and heart within. We have a deep concern in preserving from destruction the *thoughts* of the past, the leading conceptions of all remarkable forms of civilization; the achievements of genius, of virtue, and of high faith. And in this, nothing can disappoint us: for though these things may be indi-

vidually forgotten, collectively they survive, and are in action still. All the past ages of the world were necessary to the formation of the present ; they are essential ingredients in the events that occur daily before our eyes. There is no period so ancient, no country so remote, that it could be cancelled without producing a present shock upon the earth. One layer of time has Providence piled up upon another for immemorial ages : we that live stand now upon this ' great mountain of the Lord ;' were the strata below removed, the fabric and ourselves would fall in ruins. Had Greece, or Rome, or Palestine, been other than they were, Christianity could not have been what it is : had Romanism been different, Protestantism could not have been the same, and we might not have been here this day. The separate civilizations of past centuries may be of colours singly indiscernible ; but in truth, they are the prismatic rays which, united, form our present light. And do we look back on the great and good, lamenting that they are gone ? Do we bend in commemorative reverence before them, and wish that our lot had been cast in their better days ? What is the peculiar function which heaven assigns to such minds, when tenants of our earth ? Have the great and the good any nobler office than to touch the human heart with deep veneration for greatness and goodness ?—to kindle in the understanding the light of more glorious conceptions, and in the conscience the fires of a holier virtue ? And that we grieve for their departure, and invoke their names, is proof that they are performing such blessed office still,—that this, their highest life for others, compared with which their personal agency is nothing, is not extinct. Indeed, God has so framed our memory that it is the infirmities of noble souls which chiefly fall

into the shadows of the past ; while whatever is fair and excellent in their lives, comes forth from the gloom in ideal beauty, and leads us on through the wilds and mazes of our mortal way. Nor does the retrospect, thus glorified, deceive us by any fallacy ; for things present with us we comprehend far less completely, and appreciate less impartially, than things past. Nothing can become a clear object of our thought, while we ourselves are in it : we understand not our childhood, till we have left it ; our youth, till it has departed ; our life itself till it verges to its close ; or the majesty of genius and holiness, till we look back on them as fled. Each portion of our human experience becomes in succession intelligible to us, as we quit it for a new point of view. God has stationed us at the intersecting line between the known and the unknown : he has planted us on a floating island of mystery, from which we survey the expanse behind in the clear light of experience and truth, and cleave the waves, invisible, yet ever breaking, of the unbounded future. Our very progress, which is our peculiar glory, consists in at once losing and learning the past ; in gaining fresh stations from which to take a wiser retrospect, and become more deeply aware of the treasures we have used. We are never so conscious of the succession of blessings which God's Providence has heaped on us, as when lamenting the lapse of years ; and are then richest in the fruits of time, when mourning that time steals those fruits away.

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